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*The*  
**MASTER BUILDERS**





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“‘We will trust each other,’ she said.”

[Page 118]

*The*  
**MASTER BUILDERS**

*By* JAMES EDMUND DUNNING

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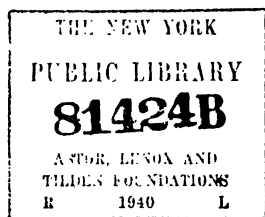
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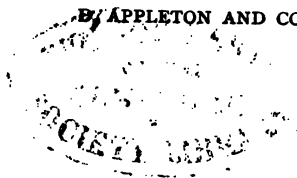
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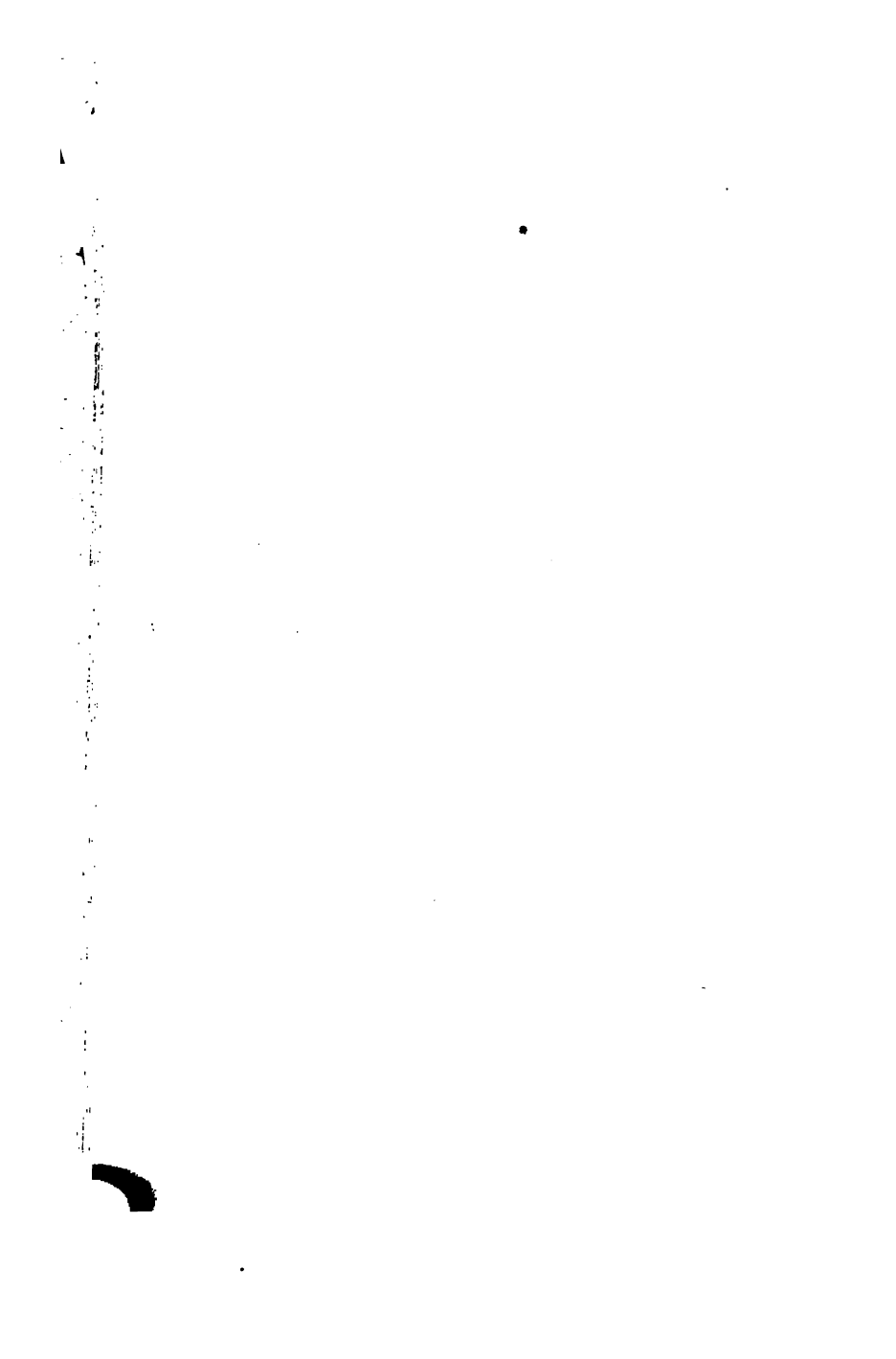
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*Published June, 1909*

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TO  
THE ORIGINAL OF  
"THE POSTMASTER"



. . . As a wise Master Builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

I COR. iii, 10.





# CONTENTS

---

	PAGE
PROLOGUE—"HARRISON" . . . . .	I
 CHAPTER	
I.—THE FIRM OF TORRENS . . . . .	17
II.—AN INTERVIEW AND AN EAVESDROPPER . . . . .	29
III.—"MY DEAR SON ——" . . . . .	37
IV.—AN UNINVITED GUEST . . . . .	49
V.—THE LAUNCHING . . . . .	60
VI.—A SURPRISINGLY EASY LOAN . . . . .	76
VII.—THE MAN IN THE LOG HOUSE . . . . .	94
VIII.—A SAIL IN A BOAT . . . . .	105
IX.—MR. WHITEHEAD SHOWS HIS HAND . . . . .	119
X.—A MESSAGE AND A MESSENGER . . . . .	132
XI.—A CIPHER MESSAGE . . . . .	144
XII.—THE RAJAH RINA OF BAWHALPORE . . . . .	155
XIII.—THE FRIDAY MEETING . . . . .	163
XIV.—THE OLDPORT COAL TRUST . . . . .	178
XV.—THE YARN OF THE ROYAL TAR . . . . .	191
XVI.—THE GREAT SUNDAY EXCURSION . . . . .	206
XVII.—AN UNDELIVERED SERMON . . . . .	219
XVIII.—THE STRIKE . . . . .	231
XIX.—THE REGENERATION OF A SAINT . . . . .	240
XX.—A MAN AWAKE . . . . .	246
XXI.—THE LAST CALL . . . . .	255

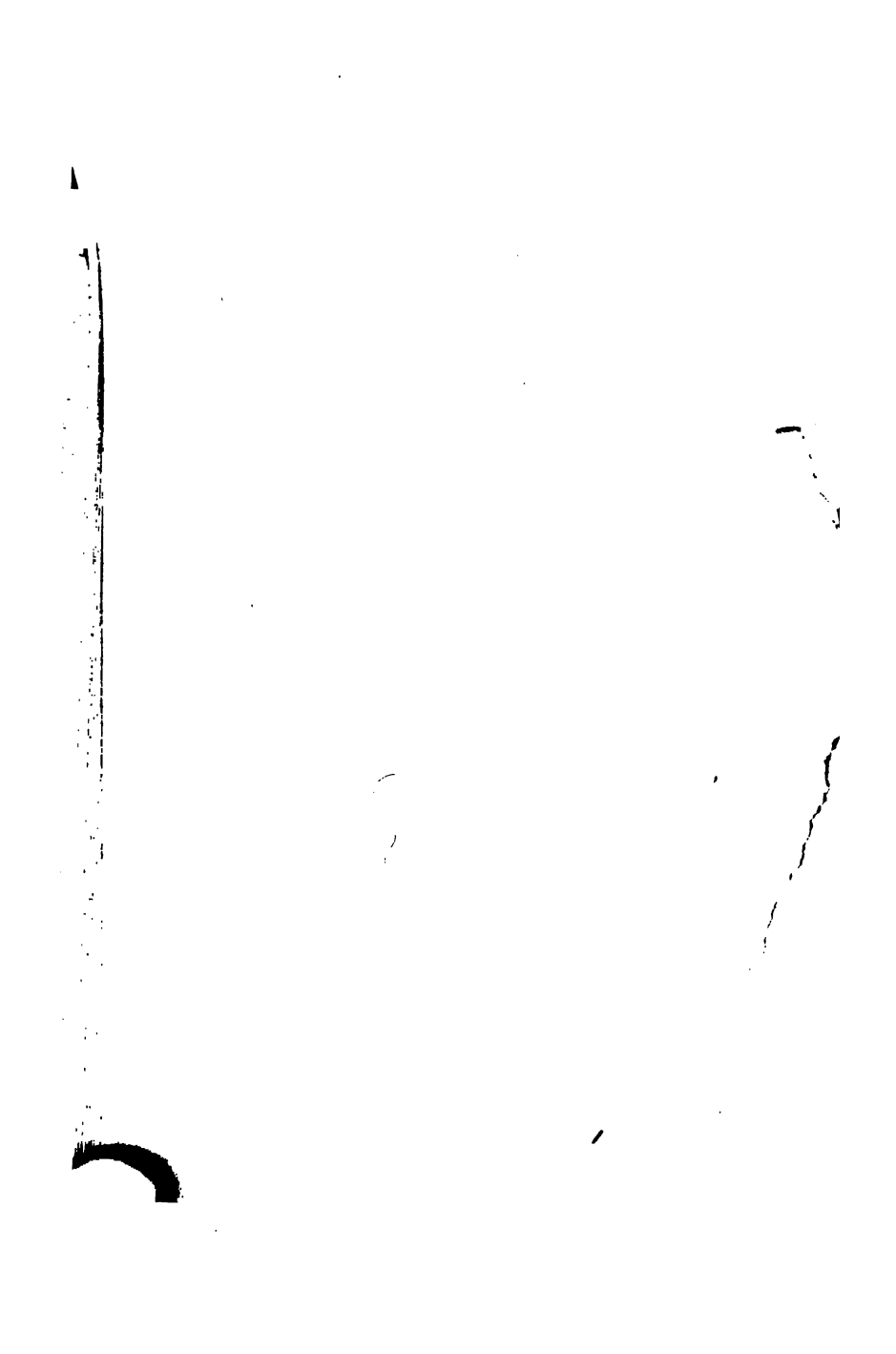
## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	1
XXII.—THE WIDOW DIX, FINANCIER . . . .	
XXIII.—UNDER WAY . . . . .	
XXIV.—A WIRELESS MESSAGE . . . . .	
XXV.—THE FIGHT FOR THE SHIP . . . . .	
XXVI.—THE SECOND IN COMMAND . . . . .	
XXVII.—THE FLYING WEDGE . . . . .	
XXVIII.—AN END AND A BEGINNING . . . . .	

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

---

	FACING PAGE
“‘We will trust each other,’ she said” . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
“‘Hardly cipher—just plain fooling,’ said the girl” . . .	152
Don’t you dare move or open your mouth until you’re told to do so” . . . . .	168
“‘Not from here. . . , There’s trouble on the line’” . . .	268



# THE MASTER BUILDERS

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## PROLOGUE

"HARRISON"

THE owner of the Trentin Shipyards was leaving his offices one January afternoon in 1890 when a boy from the neighboring village of Oldport Harbor handed him a special-delivery letter from his son at the Naval Academy. On account of what he had inferred from a number of earlier and equally urgent communications from the same source, he turned back to his desk with intense annoyance indicated in his rather florid face. The matter proved worse than his expectations had forecasted it. His son, Midshipman Hector Trentin, though having successfully completed the Academy course in all its branches and having been sent to sea with his class in the regular order of Annapolis history, had been dismissed from the service of the United States for a persistently and inexcusably low discipline and efficiency record. He had been sufficiently warned, and the order was final.

Mr. Trentin threw down the letter, and, refastening his heavy coat, went out into the snow once more. In

## THE MASTER BUILDERS

front of the office building he halted and looked down across the Yard where all his works were outspread before him—the long stretch of harbor front with its motley jumble of variously dismantled craft come to have their divers ills attended; the ungainly ship-houses, the blacksmith shop, the timber stack, the sail loft, the marine railway, and the draughting offices; and farther on the metal bones of rapidly growing machine shops where was to be taken up the new labor of those steel ships which were now fast replacing the fleets of oak. All this was his. It had come down to him from his father and from his father's father. It was known everywhere as the Trentin Yard, and in every corner of the world's wide waters, from Hudson Bay to the Garden Reach, there were men, some white, some black, and never two alike, who could look down an anchorage and say to you that there, by this and that virtue in her shape and style, lay a Trentin ship. And now the lad who was to come after him to build in steel where he and his fathers had worked in wood and tar, was down in a disgrace which, even though it had been foreshadowed by numerous significant events, was a disheartening sorrow and a shock.

The elder Trentin swore a good bit at things in general that afternoon, and more particularly and with fervor when he reflected upon the amount of money he had borrowed to lay down the initial work of what he had intended to make a great warship plant headed by a service-trained young man with influence in the Navy Department for the capture of government con-



## **"HARRISON"**

tracts. He was relieving his mind most eloquently to an audience of accumulated snow heaps, when he noticed a small schooner beating up the harbor toward the Yard. He noticed her first because she was so heavily iced in the bows, and again on account of her erratic and unseamanlike conduct. A heavy swell was running against a strong ebb tide, and the consequently troublesome sea was aggravated by one of the uncompromising young gales which sweep the New England coast in winter. As the schooner yawed back and forth wildly, like a beast struggling to escape from an ignorant master, she spanked her nose down into the short seas and the wind sent flying back over her a heavy shower of spray which froze to her sails and hull the instant it splashed on them.

As the little craft was obviously in distress and making the best of a perilous way toward the shelter offered by the slips of the yard piers, Mr. Trentin called several men and led them down to meet her when she finally plunged alongside with her glittering sails crackling in the breeze. As she fetched in, he saw that the only man on deck was at the wheel, encased in an oilskin suit which was completely covered with ice, while his head was so muffled in an old-fashioned knit scarf that not one of his features was visible. The yard men secured the schooner for the moment in order that her people might come off, but the figure at the wheel did not move.

"Coming ashore?" called Mr. Trentin sharply.

"I can't, sir," was the answer in a muffled voice, "my hands are frozen to the wheel!"



## THE MASTER BUILDERS

Two yard men sprang down and pried the steersman's red mittens off the spokes to which they were iced so solidly he had been unable to move a finger.

"Hands all right, mate?" asked one of the men.

There was no answer. The bundled figure clutched with one feeble gesture at its neck, and then toppled over into the arms of the men, who flung themselves forward to catch it.

"Bring him up," directed Mr. Trentin, calling to other men. "Bear a hand here and get this fellow under cover."

They lifted the limp oilskins up to the pier. Mr. Trentin himself rapidly unwound the scarf to let in the reviving air. He was bending close over the figure as it lay in the arms of his men when, as the last roll of soggy fabric came off and exposed an emaciated face streaked across with damp black hair, he sprang back with a sharp cry.

"It's a woman, by George!" exclaimed one of the men.

"It's a woman, sir," repeated another to the shipbuilder. He did not speak, but stared with incredulous terror at the pallid cheeks before him.

"Hadn't we better take her up?" asked the man, more to his mates than to his silent master.

"Yes," said Mr. Trentin mechanically. "Take her up."

He was interrupted by a shout from the schooner's deck, where some of the men were making things fast. They pointed to the slide of the companion way leading up from the cabin. It was moving slowly back-



## **"HARRISON"**

ward. Presently the head of a man appeared in the opening, next his shoulders. Then he pushed the slide full wide, and, unfastening the wooden pin which held the swinging doors in place, threw them back. He looked about quickly.

"Where is she?" he demanded.

"She is safe," responded the shipbuilder, interrupting the ready and more voluble explanations of his crew. "Are there any more of you aboard?"

The man, whose face was a singular mixture of boyish confidence and premature cynicism, dropped out of sight. An instant later there arose from the cabin a violent roaring like a lion in a temper.

"Must be a circus in the hold," observed one of the relief party in the midst of thumping his arms around his body to keep the blood moving in them.

"Here's the skipper!" announced the young man, popping his head out again unexpectedly. He emerged upon the deck this time, dragging a sorry heap of not much in particular, which after a moment straightened itself out into a squat, square-shouldered man of middle age or more, whose eyes blazed fiercely under a cloth cap, the earlaps of which were tied with a tape under his bluish chin, and whose hands were so securely bound behind his back that he moved his arms with difficulty.

"Cast off my hands!" he shouted. "Cast 'em off! I want that boy arrested!"

The young man laughed.

"Haven't you had enough, cap'n?" he asked.

"I've had enough of you!" roared the skipper, get-

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

ting his hands free through the aid of the men who had been untying him, and waving them excitedly. "You young, unfathered son of the poorhouse! You wait until I can get ashore, you——"

He broke into a burst of vile profanity so terrible that even the seasoned yard men were for putting a stop on him. But the young man saved them the trouble. He evaded with practiced dexterity a clumsy swing of the cursing skipper's hand, caught him quickly by the neck, and, advancing one knee, pushed him backward across it so that he was thrown half-way up to the mainmast and sprawled howling on the deck load of pine laths. As the skipper rose the young man met him again and, grappling him from behind, urged him down astern with a dancing motion which was described with great variety of detail for many a long day thereafter in the yard. At the rail he halted.

"Now," he said, evidently not put out by his exertions, "I'm going to throw you overboard! One, two——"

"No! Stop!" cried Mr. Trentin. "That will do."

"Very well, sir," assented the skipper's captor. "To please you I'll let him go."

He flung the man away from him, and climbed up on the pier.

"Where did she go?" he asked, looking here and there through the Yard. "You said she was all right."

"She is—she is all right," answered Mr. Trentin. He was looking at the boy with a curious expression of almost fearful interest.

## **"HARRISON"**

"Are you—are you—" he seemed to be speaking with difficulty— "Who is she?" he asked.

"She's my mother," said the other. "You're Eastwood Trentin, aren't you? I want to speak with you if we can go where it's warmer than it is here. Where can we go?"

The shipbuilder's gaze never left the face and figure of the young fellow before him. It wandered over them and studied the fair head of uncut, tangled hair, the clear and cold gray eyes, the unfettered poise of the strikingly solid and muscular body, which was sufficiently ill clad to be revealed in its heavy lines.

"This way," said Mr. Trentin at length. He led the way toward the office. From the clouded face of the clerk who came hastening out to meet them, he read the ill report of what had happened to the woman, and turned the messenger aside with a warning gesture, commanding silence. Within he placed his visitor by the stove.

"Go ahead, sir," he said, "what is it you want?" In spite of the violent trembling which had taken possession of him, he tried to make his voice kindly and encouraging. He wanted the whole of the sailor's story.

"Some one better take care of her and the skipper," suggested the visitor. "He'll be worse than ever, after this."

"She is safe from him now," responded Mr. Trentin. Involuntarily he sprang out of his chair and walked across the room. His jaw shook so that his

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

teeth chattered. Nervously he struck his hands together and threw up his shoulders.

"You got a chill, I guess," observed the young man.

"Yes," replied the shipbuilder. "Maybe I did. Go ahead. What is it? What brought you here? Do you want anything? I was just going out."

"I'll be done in five minutes," declared the late crew of the schooner confidently. "We brought up here to-day to get you to give me a chance in the yard. I tied the skipper to his bunk off the Cape this morning. He did worse than that to me—many a time since he took us off the town farm at East Haven."

"The what?" asked Mr. Trentin.

"The town farm—the poorhouse," replied the other. "I was born there. For a long time afterwards my mother was sick, and they were good to her and let us stay. I don't know who my father was. There was some secret to it, and she's never told anyone."

"She never told—anyone!" repeated Mr. Trentin. He had suddenly thrown himself forward in his chair. The exclamation, which began in a cry, ended in a whisper.

"Never would," was the answer. "She's quiet and different, and something about it hurt her, and I quit asking. When I was big enough I worked around for my keep, and when I was fifteen I went to sea. The coasting skippers could get me cheap, and I had work all the time. But there was no getting ahead, and she kept sickly and couldn't help herself. So after a while she married the skipper."

## **"HARRISON"**

"She—" Mr. Trentin made an effort to speak, but the words would not come. His lips moved and a guttural whisper rattled from his throat. He sank back and put one hand over his eyes.

"I don't wonder it gags you," said the youth. "I think it did her some. But she thought it was best for the both of us to have some one to take care of things. From the day she married him he——"

"Skip that!" interrupted Mr. Trentin. "Come down to the point. What do you want? She never told anything, you said."

"No," was the reply. "But the skipper, he was right with us every day. I know all about him. We'll pass a lot of things, as you say. But I laid it all up against him, and this morning I came twenty-one—it's my birthday—and I paid him back for all he did to me and her. Afterwards, I got her to put the schooner in here. She's been planning for a long time for me to come here and ask you for a place."

"She had been planning?"

"Yes. She always said you were a good man to be with, and that if I could get you to give me a berth there would be something in it when I got older. We talked about that when he wasn't around—when he was full—or ashore. So after I tied him up this morning I stayed below and hectored him while she brought the schooner up. She hasn't been in good shape for a long while, and now I've broken over with him she's got to stay ashore and be somebody. That's why I want work where I can earn something besides my keep."

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"Work!" said Mr. Trentin, as if he could not believe it. "All you want is work! You haven't come to— You don't want anything else?"

"I want a chance in the yard," was the simple answer. "You're going to build steel ships here pretty soon, they say. Are you?"

"Yes."

"That's where I want to be. I understand machinery. I like it. That's the reason. If you'll give me a berth I'll stay with you till I've paid what you think it cost you to teach me."

"What can you do?"

"I can learn how to do anything you want done."

The shipbuilder laughed into the earnest, fearless face before him. His own self-command was returning with certain reassurances implied by the young man's evidently sincere appeal. A characteristic ability to throw off disagreeable situations at the expense of the next immediate offering of chance, came to his aid. The situation simplified rapidly and there was body to his laugh.

"I want a good deal done," he said.

"Then I'm the man to do it!" was the instant retort.

Mr. Trentin's eyes fell on the letter he had just received from Annapolis. Perhaps he thought of that other boy of twenty-one who was throwing away opportunities this one was fighting to gain for himself. Maybe he wanted to be away where he could get the afternoon's chill out of him. Perhaps he had another reason. At any rate, he rose quickly and started to-

## **"HARRISON"**

ward the door. On his way he stopped by the boy's side and, after a momentary and rather awkward hesitation, put his hand on the broad, hard shoulder next his own.

"My lad," he said, fully himself once more and giving forth the voice of friendly kindness which had helped him through many a hard place before, "somebody must tell you, and I may as well. She—I mean your mother—the exposure and his—and everything—they were too much for her."

"You mean she's—you mean she's dead?"

"I'm not sure it's so bad—I fear it may be. Come with me."

They passed into the adjoining room. A group of clerks were standing about a black-shrouded figure which had been laid across two chairs. Near the other doorway the village doctor was buttoning himself into his bearskin coat. Mr. Trentin stopped abruptly and caught his companion by the arm. The two faced each other. Again the older man felt himself trembling painfully.

"She's gone," he whispered. "We need not see her. It would do no good."

"I've been expecting it a long time," said the other. "She wasn't cut out for that sort of life; but we couldn't seem to get out of it in time to do us any good. I did all I could. The skipper'll have to take care of her now. They can make him do that, can't they? Well, then, perhaps we better go see her."

Mr. Trentin shook his head in mute refusal. The youth crossed the room, and the others stood back,



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

watching him with the morbid curiosity of their breeding, but not obtrusively. He bent and lifted one limp arm and held the hand for a moment, while he looked steadily into the dead and beaten face—the stained and grimy and frozen face of a woman who had once been so lovely and so lately fresh and young, that even in the poor surroundings of her piteous end there gleamed upon her features the lingering, flickering glow of pride and beauty. Not a sign of emotion was visible in him as he stood there. Presently he turned toward Mr. Trentin without dropping the hand which he had placed between the two of his.

“We can’t do anything,” he observed. “He’ll have to take care of her.”

The shipbuilder nodded.

For a final instant, son regarded mother. There was expression neither in his face nor attitude. Then he gently placed the hand upon her silent bosom, and, wheeling quickly, walked straight past Mr. Trentin and into the room from which they had come. If for the slightest portion of measurable time one sign of natural agony and sense of loss was allowed visible indication in him, it had been effectually suppressed by the time the two were again together behind the closed door of the inner room.

“Well,” said the young man curtly, “will you give me the berth on those terms?”

The heartlessness of it struck the shipbuilder with a shock. But he seemed to recognize something not unnatural in the bearing of his strange new protégé and, as if they two had agreed that the past should see

## **"HARRISON"**

to the burial of its own, returned to the practical subject which had before engaged them.

"You can make a try at it," agreed Mr. Trentin. He began preparing to leave the Yard. "See the head bookkeeper when you get ready, and have him take your name. Look over the Yard and be here some morning at half past six ready for work. By the way"—he turned suddenly full upon his neighbor—"what is your name, anyhow?"

"Harrison," said the boy. "I'll be here to-morrow morning."

Mr. Trentin got into his sleigh, after leaving some orders for the benefit of the captain of the schooner and the work he had to do, and jingled away to Hunting's Hotel, in the center of Oldport Village. He put his horse under the shed, and blanketed him. Then he entered the house by a side door, walked along a dark passage, up a flight of stairs where his still shaking knees gave him not a little trouble, and along another passage above the first. Then, after descending a second narrow staircase, he knocked five times at certain irregular intervals on a closed door. When it was opened and he stepped in, there was a smothered burst of welcome from a number of other men seated about a table in front of a comfortably stocked Prohibition bar.

"You're late, Cap'n Trentin," remarked a man who was just shoving a round oak heart into the already overheated air-tight stove.

"Who's that over there?" demanded Mr. Trentin,

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

ignoring the question and the title which Oldport Harbor deferentially applied to every man who paid above a hundred dollars in taxes. He pointed to a limp, sleeping figure in the corner back of the stove.

"Nobody but Sam Nowell on his Chris'mus reg'lar; be'n here sence yisterday," replied the man who had stoked the fire, going around behind the bar and pretending to hunt for something. At the same time the four men who had been sitting by the table arose with innocent alacrity and leaned on the counter of the bar, one of them unsteadily. The shipbuilder made a sign by which directly five glasses were filled and placed in a row before the expectant group. One of the glasses had been slyly filled from Mr. Trentin's private stock beneath the bar instead of from the unlabeled "long-necker" kept for less aristocratic customers, but only he and the bartender were in that secret, and all were happy.

"Well, gentlemen!" said Mr. Trentin, lifting his glass and looking along the line of maudlin, unshaven faces, their hungry jaws wet with expectant desire for the drink and worked into imbecile smiles of flattered satisfaction at being at tipped elbows with the great man of the town.

"Well, gentlemen," he repeated with a grandiloquent emphasis which was not lost upon his audience, "here's wishing ourselves a happy New Year!"

The busy and significant silence immediately following was broken by a crash so heavy as to shake the whole room. The drinkers snatched away their glasses and threw them into the stove with the correct

## **"HARRISON"**

aim of frequent practice. The bartender sprang to the end of his counter and in a second had jerked a steel chain which led below. The whole front of the bar, with its store of liquors, tipped downward and slid out of sight with a terrific noise of broken wood and glass into an abyss from which shot up a blast of cold air laden with the unhappy odors of pent swine.

"The sheriffs!" whispered some one. All waited breathlessly for the second attack upon the door. It did not come. Instead, there was only a resounding snore from the other side of the room.

"Thunder!" cursed the bartender in a desperate and peculiar agony, "it wa'n't the sheriffs at all. It wa'n't only Sam Nowell. He's fell off the bench onto the floor. Only Sam Nowell, and three hundred dollars' worth of good liquor gone into the barnyard!" He looked at Mr. Trentin.

"How be I a-goin' to square myself!" he resumed, in a whine.

"Give yourself no concern, gentlemen," said Mr. Trentin, again assuming the grand air which was a part of his connection with the place. "No one is to blame—no one but myself. I should have invited our friend to join us, and this has repaid me well for my lack of manners. Hunting, refit your bar and send the bill to me. Good afternoon, gentlemen—my regards!"

Closing the door carefully behind him, the first citizen of Oldport Harbor stumbled up and down the crazy passages by which the approach to the bar was artfully concealed, and drove away to the less coveted

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

associations of his home on the shore below the town.

"Harrison!" he said to himself now and then along the way. He kept remembering the boy's indifference to fine feeling and contrasting it with his own. Neither of them mourned the woman who was gone. Something in the curiously tragic situation satisfied the shipbuilder's anger toward his midshipman son. He laughed aloud in thinking of it.

"Harrison!" he said again. "She chose a good name for them. Harrison! And he talked to me as if he owned the Yard!"

## CHAPTER I

### THE FIRM OF TORRENS

**T**HE foremost fact in the history of the Trentin Yard was its need of money. In the first ten years of Harrison's stay there, from the day of his strange arrival to the night he sat over the books until dawn at the elbow of his chief, that was the main cry.

"We are going to be short," said the shipbuilder toward the end of their conference, "and there is no way out of it."

"There's a way out of everything," declared Harrison.

"If you can find it!" added the older man.

"I can find it," insisted Harrison.

Mr. Trentin sat back in his chair and looked at his neighbor with one of the rare and almost affectionate smiles that no sort of pain had been able to erase from his countenance.

"Harrison," he said, "haven't you ever been afraid of anything?"

"No," was the answer—not a boastful answer, but the plain word of a man who wasted no effort in getting to his point. He had taken off his coat, and his hair was rumpled from much twisting of the stubby,

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

muscular fingers that could never fully get themselves around a pencil, but doubled themselves up into a fist as hard as iron. His straight mouth snapped shut on the one word of his stout reply, the under lip bulging in a set grip, the lines of which ran off on either side into the square jowls of his hard and not freshly shaven face. Everyone who looked at Harrison invariably thought of a bull dog squared off for a fight. He had the pose, even to the forward tilt of his round head and the shortness of his neck. And yet, the ship-builder could never see him without a thrill of satisfaction for the immensity of these very physical qualities. If Harrison saw the smile he did not reflect it in any alteration of his accustomed gravity. He was a man of no imaginations, intent only on his ends.

"What do you suggest?" asked Mr. Trentin. "We're saddled with contracts too big for our resources, and not a dollar of credit in banks where we are already borrowed to and beyond our limit."

"Get the money, that's all," responded Harrison. He closed the book they had been working on, and threw his pencil over his shoulder with a contemptuous gesture perfectly illustrative of his character. "What we want is money. Let's go and get it."

"Where?" asked Mr. Trentin, amused even in the face of their troubles.

"Wherever they have it," replied Harrison promptly. "If we don't know we can find out."

"It isn't so easy," remonstrated Mr. Trentin.

"If it was easy we wouldn't need it, would we?" retorted Harrison. He grew impatient on the slight-

## **THE FIRM OF TORRENS**

est provocation; and Mr. Trentin, ever ready to avoid an altercation, gave in before the intolerant courage of his junior.

"Do you know where we could do it?" he asked.

"No—do you?"

"Certainly not at any bank."

"Well?"

Mr. Trentin found himself driven to a corner by the uncompromising directness of the attack. Instead of planning for a surrender, as he had intended at the beginning of the night, he was forced up and on by the lash of Harrison's gray eyes. He left his chair and walked around the room for a few minutes. He hoped Harrison would say something, but Harrison said not a syllable, nor even looked at him.

"There is only one place," said Mr. Trentin, returning to his desk. "We can ask Torrens & Co. to let us have it. Their conditions will be ruinous——"

"We'll see about that," interrupted Harrison.

"All we want to know is where the money is. It takes two to trade and we're one."

"You don't know Torrens," objected Mr. Trentin.

"I'm going to," retorted Harrison. "I'm going with you. Where is it?"

"Now, Harrison," said Mr. Trentin, making one last stand, "you mustn't assume too much. You don't understand."

"You go and get ready to start," directed Harrison. "Is it to New York? All right. The train goes at seven-twenty. I'll meet you at the station. You needn't think I don't understand. You know I do."



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

What have I been doing the last ten years? Is there any man in the Yard or out of it knows it as I do? Do you know it? Don't you come to me for everything nowadays? Doesn't everybody know I say my say and that nothing else goes? Doesn't every man in the place take his orders from me? Have you got a general manager here or have you got me? You know as well as I do that I know the Yard and run it, and I'm going to New York and see these people with you. You can find the money, but I make the terms. You'll need me, and you know it."

Mr. Trentin looked at his watch and then closed his desk. He put his hand on Harrison's shoulder, a thing he did so seldom and which no one else ever dared do, that Harrison shook him off.

"I do need you," agreed the shipbuilder. "Meet me at the station. We better get cleaned up. Appearance is a good deal when you are begging."

"What we want is the money," responded Harrison. Turning with characteristic abruptness and without other remark, he went into the adjoining room and closed the door.

The firm of Torrens was not much of Torrens except in name. If there had ever been such a personage in its makeup, he had passed from the panorama of its activities. The man whose bell was given most swift response in those offices was Mr. Whitehead, whose slender figure, though perfectly dressed, was bowed at the shoulders so heavily that his face and its overshadowing thatch of lustrous white hair were thrown far forward, and his large and rather luminous

## ***THE FIRM OF TORRENS***

eyes had an up-glancing expression sometimes disconcerting in its uncertainty. To a presence which would have been distinguished had he possessed a better frame, he added a somewhat positive suggestion of taciturnity, which was not borne out by his remarkable ability to maintain conversations which might come to nothing but for his efforts. Whitehead never said anything about himself or about his affairs. What you thought of him and what you guessed you knew about him you derived from the present moment of your interview, and not from his past or any forecast of his future. He smoked uncommonly long cigars, which he managed to keep going well after yours had done. You could do nothing with Torrens & Company without Whitehead, and it was to him that Mr. Trentin took Harrison two days after the all-night sitting at the yard.

The room in which they waited was dark with heavy carpets and dull mahogany carvings. It had so much the air of the library of a private gentleman that the visitor remembered with difficulty that the burly life of Broadway flowed just outside the massive, shaded windows. No one broke the dignity of the place. No messengers came and went. No other callers intruded. No sound of bell or knock disturbed the silence, which was as a part of the luxury of the room itself. So they waited, as Mr. Trentin had waited there many times before, knowing that Whitehead would appear in his own time.

On this occasion a full hour suited him; but it was Mr. Trentin who fumed in angry words and Harrison

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

who sat exactly as he had come in, saying nothing, with his eyes on the door. And it was not by that door that Whitehead finally entered, but by a way they had not seen, directly behind Harrison's chair. Before they heard him he was in the room and the hidden door had swung without a click behind him. He walked toward the middle of the apartment with a sort of emphatic slowness, his hands clasped at his back so that he appeared to stoop even more than unkind nature made him. His eyes were hidden from them.

"Good morning," he said. "I am sorry we kept you waiting, but you sent no request for an appointment. What is it this time? Who is your friend?"

"This is Harrison," explained Mr. Trentin.

"I remember about him. You spoke of him to me once. Just about runs things down there, doesn't he?" Whitehead chuckled a little and then threw himself up as straight as he could and looked at them and said: "Well?"

"I'm sorry to say," began Mr. Trentin, "that we need money, and have to ask for it on rather poor security."

"Security that your banks won't take," observed Whitehead comprehensively. "How much do you need?"

Mr. Trentin's lips were open on the first vital word of the interview, when its utterance was interrupted by Whitehead. He wheeled quickly toward another part of the room as if in response to some sign they had not heard.

## ***THE FIRM OF TORRENS***

"Excuse me," he said, "I am wanted in my office."

Walking straight to the paneled wall, he passed out through the same door by which he had entered. It swung open for his approach and was closed as silently when he had gone through. Harrison sprang up and rapped hard on the wall with his knotty fist, but to no purpose. Nothing happened. The shipbuilder and his protégé were left to make the most of patience.

When Whitehead reached the upper room to which he had been called, he found awaiting him a well-dressed, low-voiced, small-featured man.

"Make your report," he said. "Put down your valise and stand near my desk."

"The anonymous letter led to Washington—to a hotel, sir," began the man, obeying orders to the letter. "There I met three men, not Americans, not gentlemen, but first-class technical men—some kind of engineers. No names were asked or given. They refused to talk when they found I had no authority, and sent me back to New York with instructions to call at eight this morning at the Metropole Hotel. I went there, and a man I have never seen before handed me this slip of paper."

Whitehead took the paper. On it, in typewriting, was printed:

**Call 10466 Cortlandt immediately.**

"That is all?" asked Whitehead.

"Nothing further to report, sir."

"Call 10466 Cortlandt, then."

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"From here, sir?"

"Yes—wait. Hand me the telephone directory. Ten-four-six-six, ten-four-six-six, ten-four— Not here. New number just put in, probably. Never mind. Call them. We will find out afterwards."

The man went to the telephone and gave the number. In a moment he said:

"Hello! Is that ten-four-six-six Cortlandt? Yes—this is Torrens & Co. What is wanted? Mister who? Mr. Whitehead? W-h-i-t-e-h-e-a-d— Ah, yes; I understand. Wait a moment and I'll see if there is  
• such a gentleman here."

The speaker put one hand over the receiver and turned to his superior.

"What shall I say?" he whispered. "They called for you by name."

"Change your voice and say you are Whitehead," ordered the cautious master of Torrens & Co.

The man cleared his throat, and, replacing his soft voice with a resounding barytone, took his hand from the receiver and said sharply:

"Well? This is Mr. Whitehead. What's wanted? Who? Not the— You have made some mistake. This is— Wait a moment, please."

"It's no use, sir," he declared, again closing the receiver. "They know your voice and won't talk with anyone else."

Whitehead shrugged his shoulders and then went straight to the telephone. He slipped his own hand under that which kept the receiver closed, and said to his man:

## ***THE FIRM OF TORRENS***

"You're Number Eight, I believe?"

"Yes, sir," replied the man.

"Wait for me in your own room," he commanded.

When Number Eight had gone out, Whitehead turned to the telephone.

"Go ahead," said he. "What do you want?"

"Mr. Whitehead," said a remarkably distinct feminine voice, as if the words were being read with great care from a paper held before the speaker.

"What?" retorted he.

"Certain parties with unlimited resources wish to come into possession of a warship now about to be launched at the Trentin Shipyards. It being impossible to buy her from the United States Government, and it not being desired to destroy her, but to make her available for use at sea on or about a certain date, other methods must be used to get possession of the ship without violating any of the treaty provisions or international law. The parties interested will pay any necessary price to anyone who can deliver her."

"But——"

"Please don't interrupt!" said the voice, dropping its steady, high-pitched tone for an instant and as quickly resuming it. "Our agents report that the principal owner of the shipyard left his home yesterday, accompanied by one man, with the purpose of visiting you, and that he is in need of funds. In fact, it has been reported to us that he is at this moment in your offices. Will you take the matter on?"

"Certainly not," replied Whitehead.

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"Exactly," responded the voice. "We understand each other perfectly. To repay you for your trouble this morning, an envelope containing fifty one-thousand-dollar bills will be delivered into your hands by a messenger who will know nothing of its contents or of us. He will come to you within the next hour. The source which supplies this retainer will in the same way supply any other sum you may require at any time, if you will call this number and simply leave your name twenty-four hours before you need the money. Remember, we either want the ship or want her completion to be retarded until too late to use her in active service."

"But——"

"Good morning," said the voice, and a second later Whitehead was calling more or less excitedly into a dead and silent telephone. Then he realized the uselessness of probing too deeply, and remembered with satisfaction that even if Number Eight had been listening at the door he had overheard nothing more than the two ineffectual "buts." The sheer boldness of the proposal impressed Whitehead. He only half believed it. It was too direct. Even for unlimited resources, some one was running a risk too great for probability. And yet, Whitehead admitted the good sense of the plan which went straight to the point on the first move, and did not forget that the people who had talked with him had some evident means for spying upon every movement in the Trentin Yard. He rang for Number Eight.

"Have the men below brought up here," he said,

## ***THE FIRM OF TORRENS***

“and remain on duty until I give you further instructions.”

Number Eight left the room. He went out through the succeeding chambers making up the seat of Torrens & Co., each of them furnished with its own exquisite care and not one with any sign to show the kind of merchandise trafficked in by the firm. No hurrying customers, no rattling typewriters, no fenced-off cashiers—only here and there a sober man or two seated at comfortable desks with series of telephones at their elbows. They did not even look up when their colleague passed them by. But there was no one below. The room was empty. The man at the main door of the building reported that he had seen Mr. Trentin and Harrison go out ten minutes before, and that they had called a cab to take them to the Grand Central Station.

Number Eight hastened back with this information. Whitehead broke a lifelong rule to the extent of a group of picturesque curses, and ordered a bag packed for a midnight train. Then, after making sundry dispositions to cover his office while he was away, he said to Number Eight:

“Get Number Three on the telephone.”

The man consulted a list pinned behind Whitehead's desk, and presently called his chief to the instrument.

“You may wait outside,” said Whitehead. When he was alone he spoke into the telephone again.

“Is this you, Miss Von Bianchi? Good. Please meet me at the Grand Central Station for the midnight Boston train to-night. Be prepared for a long job.



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

Bring all your good clothes. You may be all summer. Take as many trunks as you like. Understand? Thanks. *Au revoir!*"

He left the telephone and looked at his watch, laughing meantime with frank excitement at the size of the game.

"In cases of really great emergency," he remarked to himself as he rang for the return of the faithful Number Eight, "the mountain can manage to take a run down to the shore to see Mohammed."

"Something for you, sir," announced Number Eight, coming in and handing his principal a long cloth envelope. "Left just now by a messenger, who said a woman handed it to him in the street."

Whitehead opened the envelope when he was again alone. It contained fifty one-thousand-dollar bills.

## CHAPTER II

### AN INTERVIEW AND AN EAVESDROPPER

**M**R. POSTMASTER PINNOT, of Oldport Harbor, was making a conscientious effort to distribute the late stage mail without undue scrutiny of the post cards, when he heard two men enter the store. He peeped through the glass fronts of the numbered mail boxes and saw that Eastwood Trentin, the Oldport shipbuilder, was being followed closely by a stranger of impressive mien—a tall man with white, close-cut hair and with shoulders rounded almost to the point of deformity. Both visitors seated themselves upon the well-whittled bench that stretched across the Government reservation of the store and served at once as the convenient resting place of those who waited for the mails and the seat of the supreme, if not judicial, court which settled Oldport's less or greater difficulties by sheer force of harmless gossip. Mr. Pinnot stowed away the few remaining letters, lingered regretfully over an uncommonly fascinating picture postal from a foreign country, and was about emerging to make himself seen when he heard the stranger say:

"Now, then, Trentin, don't be tripped up by the bad temper of your wild young Harrison. He ran

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

you away too hastily there in New York. We have to consider on big things like this. How badly do you want the money?"

Mr. Pinnot halted in the exquisitely painful position of standing perfectly still with one foot raised seven inches in the air. He recognized the question which faced him, and put it to himself without equivocation. By a flash of fate he, the postmaster of Oldport Harbor, duly qualified and commissioned, had become possessed of a secret, or was surely about to become possessed of it, involving the solvency of the Yard and the welfare of the town. Could he, after that disclosure, appear and admit his knowledge? Could he so far embarrass Mr. Trentin and capsize a number of vitally important arrangements at the moment when they were being floated on an even keel? His nature revolted at the thought. Neither Cap'n Samuel Pinnot, merchant and general trader, nor the Hon. S. Pinnot, United States Postmaster (fourth class), and an officer of the Federal Government, could stomach the idea of prejudicing the interests of Oldport Harbor by the untimely interruption of a consequential, not to say promising, interview.

Mr. Pinnot put foot to floor with a fixed but discreetly noiseless decision. Having made out his duty in the premises, he proceeded to action. Leaving Samuel Pinnot, general trader and notary public, entirely out of the whole matter (as being something not at all his business), the postmaster tiptoed with successful caution to where an up-ended salt box offered favorable terms. He satisfied himself that Mrs.

## ***INTERVIEW AND AN EAVESDROPPER***

Dix, the telegraph operator who had window room in the northeast corner of the store, was not so occupied as to admit any prowler to the rape of the spring stock, applied his ear to a crevice in the Government partition wall, and lost himself in an ecstasy of wondering agitation.

"Well, now, Whitehead," said Mr. Trentin, "you came down here after us because you wanted to do business, didn't you?"

"Who gave you that valuable idea?" asked Whitehead. It was a new thing to find Mr. Trentin playing his own game.

"That valuable idea was contributed by Harrison," replied the shipbuilder, "and I'm interested to see it was a good one. You followed us down here for something. What was it?"

"So we're going to talk straight, are we?" said Whitehead, making that final move for position in the hope that Mr. Trentin might resume his old, easy-going way of stating his case in advance.

"You are going to, Whitehead," was the answer. "If we are going to do business, you've got to."

"Very well, then," responded Whitehead. He dropped his familiarly confident manner like the mask it was, and struck right at the point.

"I understand you want a loan?"

"Did you bring the money?"

"No—that is, not in cash."

"Then you have a proposition to make as a condition to a loan, and came all this way because you thought we might not come to you again!" Very

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

much of the latent mental ferocity of Harrison was suggested to Whitehead by the strange new vigor of the older man. He saw that the shipbuilder had been coached, and that the argument was really not with him, but with Harrison himself. And Harrison he had always feared.

"You have guessed it," answered Whitehead, taking the only course left him.

"State it!" directed Mr. Trentin. His usually languid voice snapped out the words.

Whitehead hesitated. He was not prepared for such a direct attack, or for any attack, from this old man whom they had come to think of as distanced in the race which had ever been just too much for him.

"You see, Trentin," he objected, "this is a sort of delicate matter."

"Is it?"

"Why—yes."

"Oh!" responded Mr. Trentin, and stopped short.

Whitehead took from his pocket two immense cigars. Mr. Trentin shook his head immediately, and Whitehead restored one to his case before lighting the other. Meanwhile nothing was said by either man.

"Now, then," suggested Whitehead at last.

"Well—what?" inquired Mr. Trentin calmly. "Did you come away down here to smoke a cigar with a man who wanted to borrow money of you two days ago and doesn't now?"

"That's the very point, Trentin!" exclaimed Whitehead, catching eagerly at anything. "You wanted

## ***INTERVIEW AND AN EAVESDROPPER***

that money—probably about a hundred thousand dollars.”

“ Yes.”

“ You wouldn’t say so, but you actually wanted it in such a way that your business could go on unencumbered and no one know anything about it.”

“ Yes.”

“ You had practically no security to offer, excepting that we know all about you and have done it many times before.”

“ That is all we had to offer.”

“ If you had had more you would have offered it.”

“ Certainly.”

“ Good!” exclaimed Whitehead. “ Now we’re getting at it. You can have the money by securing us in one way. You said I must talk straight, and I’m going to. You can have the money—all you want of it—if you let us have a chance at that new cruiser as soon as she’s ready.”

“ The Number Twenty-Nine? ”

“ Yes.”

“ But she isn’t ours to trade on, Whitehead. She belongs to the Government. We couldn’t mortgage her.”

“ Naturally; but I know a party that would be glad to steal her as soon as she’s fit to be under way.”

“ Steal her!” ejaculated Mr. Trentin incredulously.

“ It couldn’t be done! ”

“ Not without help from the inside,” agreed Whitehead. “ Now I’m talking straight and plain. Our client would pay well for that. He would pay what-

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

ever was necessary for the sake of getting this cruiser away from the United States at about this time next year, or a little sooner."

"You mean that there's going to be a war, and you represent a foreign government that is going to be against us?"

"Not at all, Trentin, not at all, you're mistaken," laughed Whitehead. "I've said nothing of the kind. I only say it's worth any amount of money you want to be able to keep this cruiser from joining the United States Navy. It's worth more if she can be added to some other navy. Name your price and we'll meet it in spot cash."

"Ridiculous!" cried the shipbuilder, starting away from Whitehead as if to escape his eyes. "You must be crazy! Even if you could get anybody to make such a trade it couldn't be secured! You couldn't be secured against the Government finding out, and then where would you be?"

"Don't let that worry you," replied Whitehead. "We will do all the worrying about that. You come in with us and we'll see we're secured all right. Now, then," he continued, leaning closely upon the other's shoulder, "what do you say? Why not? There's money in it for everybody—a big price for you——"

"And a big commission for you!" interrupted Mr. Trentin.

Whitehead only laughed and pulled at his cigar. For some time neither spoke. Whitehead smoked comfortably, while Mr. Trentin stared straight ahead of him and out into the village street, pondering on

## ***INTERVIEW AND AN EAVESDROPPER***

his tangled finances and the cunning web they had wound about him. Lump sums of impossible figures flickered through his vision, strained with studying obligations the yard could not meet.

Whitehead felt his shoulder shake as with laughter, and, turning, saw his neighbor chuckling quietly to himself in a curious amusement. Very deliberately he rose from the bench, looking back and down at Whitehead as he did so.

"Your train will be going before long," he said. "Come over to the hotel and you shall have what hospitality it affords."

"And it will be a trade about the cruiser?" asked Whitehead.

"No."

"No!"

"No trade, Whitehead," repeated Mr. Trentin, turning toward the bench for a moment to face the money lender. "You made an interesting story of it, but you forgot one thing. You forgot when you followed the trail down here, Whitehead, that I'm going to fail, but that after all I'm still a better man than you."

He walked away to the street. Whitehead, seeing the futility of attack at such a time, followed him out. But at the hotel he had his last word.

"I'm drinking to my own success, Trentin," he declared. "I'm going to have that ship one way or another."

"Not if I let Harrison know your intentions, you won't," retorted Mr. Trentin grimly.



## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"There's another thing you haven't thought of, too," insisted Whitehead.

"Is there?" said Mr. Trentin, so languidly insulting that Whitehead endured the argument no longer. They continued their walk toward the hotel, the ship-builder chatting with the voluble, sarcastic pleasantry of which he was so much the master, and of sundry trivial things; Whitehead in a sullen silence that covered a mind already busy with plotting what he sought.

Afterwards they separated.

"Trentin," said Whitehead, "this is the last call, and we don't like to turn you down. We want you to have the money, and we want our people to have the ship. Remember, you can have your own price, and there'll be no danger in it. Remember," he repeated hastily as he saw the light coming back into the other's eyes, "one hundred, two hundred, three hundred thousand—it's all the same to us. Think that over and let me know. Let me know to-morrow. I'm going to stay and see her launched."

He went, as he had wished, without an answer.

## CHAPTER III

“MY DEAR SON——”

**M**R. TRENTIN remained in the village street watching Whitehead out of sight in the direction of the station. Afterwards he walked slowly toward the Yard, then halted, stood for a little time as if trying to decide some move which had occurred to him, and at last turned back through the village and went on through it to the shore. His head was bent. Even when now and then he passed some neighbor on the way he looked at no one nor made any greeting. Well down Cottage Road, out of the village and along the shore of the outer bay and sea, he turned in at a low stone gateway and, through paths bordered by a broad and flowering lawn, approached a gray-shingled house the ample proportions of which divided the gardens on the shore side from a long run of fine, clear foreshore to the sea. Instead of ringing at the side door, he passed it by, and turned the corner of the south wing of the house. Thus gaining the water side of the place, he mounted the broad porch extending straight across that front. A slender, clear-eyed young woman, who had been sitting in a green wicker chair over some embroideries, lifted a browned face and a mass of glistening tan hair, and came for-

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

ward to him with a cordiality of welcome not quite sustained by a faintly visible shadow in her smile.

"I am so glad to see you," she said as she gave him her hands.

"You are a good daughter-in-law, Emily," he responded, in the rather stately tone old gentlemen of his waning day were taught to give their compliments. "May I come and sit with you, and talk a little?"

"You shall do whatever you like best," she answered, "if you will sit here in the big chair, and have a cup of tea."

"The big chair, Emily, but not the tea," he said. "My hot-headed old grandfather compromised himself in that matter at Boston long ago, and none of us have been able to reconcile the habit with our citizenship."

"Nonsense!" she protested, now laughing with genuine mirth. "Am I not one of you?"

She was standing near him at the moment, after showing him into the chair.

"My dear," he said, "you are more than one of us. You are all of us."

She bent and kissed him softly on his forehead, and drew away. When her face was near to his like that, she saw how full it was of age and pain.

"You really must have tea," she said, for an excuse, and went into the house without ringing for the maid. A quarter of an hour later when she returned he had composed himself. Nothing more was said of tea, and she only resumed her own seat and waited for him to speak. It was this understanding between

## ***"MY DEAR SON—"***

them that always brought him to her when he needed rest.

"Where is Hector?" he asked presently.

"Up at the links, probably," she replied. "This morning he went shooting before daybreak."

"Did he get anything?"

"He always does that. The man who brought in the birds said there were many wonderful shots. They tramped twenty miles without a bite of breakfast, and you remember there was a heavy shower near ten o'clock."

"Did he come home and change?"

"No. He sent home the birds and went to the links as he was."

"It will be the death of him some day."

"I don't know. Nothing tires him. He is the strongest man I ever saw."

"Yes," remarked the shipbuilder. "Nothing tires him but work!"

She did not reply, and after a minute or two he wheeled his chair so that he could look at her.

"I ought to beg your pardon for that, Emily," he said. "You will have to forgive me a great deal on the ground that I am an old man with many cares. Still; now that I have said it, let me say a little more. You know it rests me to come here. How many times, I wonder, have I come down and sat with you when no one knew about it, and felt better! But there are some serious things—some serious things."

"Yes?" she said sympathetically, and again gave him the time she knew he needed.

## THE MASTER BUILDERS

"To-morrow we launch the cruiser," he went on when he had thought a little. "She goes off on the high water. It will be about three. Will you come?"

"Yes."

"Will—he come?"

"Yes, I think he will be very glad to come. We are all very proud of the ship, aren't we?"

"We *are* proud of her," he repeated. "We have a right to be. She has been our great work—nobody will know just how great until she has a chance to fight. Then they will know what Harrison and I and the Government know. You understand, we have called her a cruiser, but she is more than that. It has been a big work; I am glad I lived to see it and be in it. Now that it is coming to be done——"

"Oh," said Emily quickly, "now that this is done you will go on and do greater things."

"No," he said gently, "there will be no greater things for me. My course is run."

He held up his hand against the ready protest on her lips, and went on in the same patient, clear tone.

"My course is run. That I know. I should not care to run it over again unless I could do it better. But it will have to stand, and those who come after me must take it as it is and do their best in their turn. Tell me," he said, suddenly interrupting himself, "are you happy?"

"Yes," she answered, "I am happy." She looked back at him with a kind of bravery that was defiant, but which pleased him very much. "I know what you mean, and I say that I am happy."

## **"MY DEAR SON——"**

"I mean what I meant a little while ago," he said, "when I told you Hector never tired of anything but work. I am glad you are happy, and that you can be happy even when he goes shooting while Harrison and I are doing the things that mean the launching of the cruiser to-morrow afternoon."

"Please——"

"I do not say these things to hurt you, Emily," he continued, "but to warn you. What will you do when I go?"

"When you go?"

"What will you do when I am gone? My dear child, these are the things that we must face and they are what I came here to-day to say to you. Let us face them and think of them as clearly as we can. There have been these two boys in my life, Emily—these two boys who have been more to me than either of them can ever know. One of them has kept right on being a boy; and the more splendid he has been, the more courage he has shown, the more tremendous energy he has had for tramping and shooting, and the finer and handsomer he has grown the more he has shamed me because the only thing that tired him was that work we had to do at the Yard—because he would never grow up and be the splendid man I taught him how to be."

"But he is splendid!" said Emily, in a low voice and through a little wave of color that stained her browned cheeks still darker. "He is splendid! Some day he will come to himself. I can wait. I *want* to wait! I want to be with him when his day comes!"

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

“Dear child,” said Mr. Trentin pityingly. “Dear, dear child!

“And the other boy,” he resumed, going back to his steady tone, “that other boy—often he has shamed me just as much, because in coming to be a man he has forgotten to be a gentleman. And there again, the more he labored with his hands, the more fights he fought, the more bolts he forged and drove, the more men he mastered, the greater work he threshed out and accomplished—for all that, he has shamed me because there is that overplus of energy in him that makes him brutal in everything he does, that renders him contemptuous of refinements, that makes him fall short in the very moment of the great things he performs.”

“He, too,” said Emily, “will come to his day in time.”

“No,” said Mr. Trentin, “his day will overtake and run him down.”

For a time again he remained silent. Then he rose, and Emily with him.

“When I go, it is to these two I shall have to leave you. What provision I can make for you I will make; but very much more will have to fall upon yourself. You will have to be full of courage, and learn to face things out. You can do it, I believe. I want you to remember that I had that confidence in you and that I have loved you because in all the bitter hours I have had I have been able to come and be near you and have from you a sweet and lovely word to help me on. We old fellows have our sentiments; we have our trials.

## **"MY DEAR SON——"**

When you married my son you brought into my life a kind of sweetness that it wasn't my luck to have before. Remember that, and that I want you to be very brave and to be happy."

Emily did not answer him. He started down from the porch to leave her. Then he returned.

"If anything ever happens," he added, "you can remember that Harrison really understands everything. You can always trust him; but he is rough and hard, and can never be anything else. It is not by him our name and our credit will go on—if they go on at all. But he might help you to keep steady until Hector—until something happens—Heaven knows what it can be, or how you will do it! I failed. Good-by!"

"Sit down again," she pleaded. "I don't mind your talking like that—or about Hector or anything of that sort. I can wait. I know it will come. I *know* it!"

"How do you know it?" he asked.

"Because I *know*!" said she.

He looked at her very proudly, and there came into his worn face the look of respite she had learned to watch for.

"Good girl," he said, "good girl! I shouldn't wonder if you were right. Come to the launching to-morrow. Good-by."

At the corner of the house he looked back. She was still by her chair on the porch, a wonderfully winning figure in her white gown against the black of the old pine trees that lined the far side of the place. Even



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

from there the brave light in her eyes flashed into his, and leaving her alone seemed less cruel as he waved her good night and saw her kiss her hand to him.

The sweetness of her clung to him as he entered Cottage Road and began his walk back to the village.

The shipbuilder walked all the long way from the younger Trentin's house, through the village and on to the yard at the other side of the harbor. As before, he recognized no one, nor did any of the townspeople whom he passed presume to break in upon one of the moods which was best known to them among whom he had lived and worked those many years. He called for Harrison when he entered the office building, and then, meeting with no response, went into his own room and closed the door.

He sat before his littered old desk, but did not touch the papers scattered on it. He looked at them without seeing. Now and then he glanced out of the window into the busy yard. Even that did not suggest to him what it had meant before. It meant now only that he was very tired.

He took up a pen and started to write:

"My dear son——"

His hand stopped. The pen halted, lifted itself from the paper, and then fell back upon the blotter. The shipbuilder's head bent forward on his outstretched arms. He sat there until the postmaster, bringing down a special-delivery letter in his own hand, entered and found him, touched his shoulder

## ***"MY DEAR SON——"***

and saw that he did not move, and never would draw breath again. There on the blotter lay the paper with the beginning of that last message:

**"My dear son——"**

Mr. Pinnot's eye caught the words in good time. Before he called anyone he read them over and over, shaking his head in a kind of knowing wonder, and speculating on what he ought to say or do. Then he chose the only way that seemed right to his slow but clear old head, and went out and hunted up Harrison in the general offices. For once Mr. Pinnot came straight to the point. He told Harrison as plainly as he knew how; and Harrison received the news just as Mr. Pinnot had expected—without a word of sorrow.

"It won't make any difference unless it gets out before the launching to-morrow," he said, having Whitehead in mind even more than the official party which was coming for the day. "I've been running the Yard for ten years back, and I'll keep right on running it. Only don't you tell anyone about this until to-morrow morning, Pinnot. That is orders, and you remember it. Then you will have to tell young Trentin and his wife. After the launching, or at any rate not before noon, you come around and see me, and I'll let you know what I want you to do."

"Sartain," agreed Mr. Pinnot, taking these summary directions with a complacency that might have suggested something to a man of keener mind than Harrison's. "And what about this? This is all I found when I come in and found him. I suppose,"

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

he added casually, "it's meant for Mr. Hector—ain't it?"

"Why, sure!" said Harrison, handing the paper back with one glance. "It don't say much, but he might want it. You can give it to Mrs. Trentin to-morrow. Now you go up to the village and tell Dr. Philbrick to come down here on the jump, and to keep quiet about it. We'll keep him right here until I get ready to let them know to-morrow."

On his way back to the store the postmaster took the paper cautiously from his pocket and read it again.

"No," he said aloud to himself, repeating Harrison's own careless word and adding for emphasis the only expletive he was ever known to make use of in his own picturesque New England dialect, "it don't say much. But, by tidy, it doos say a lot that ain't there!"

While Mr. Trentin was visiting Emily on her porch, Whitehead was at the railroad station in conference with a tall young woman whose heavy veil did not conceal her luxuriant corn-colored hair or the brilliancy of her exceedingly animated eyes.

"I was sorry to keep you waiting," he said, making use of a tone less formal than that in which he had addressed her fellow-employees in the offices of Torrens & Co. "We have had a setback, and may have to take a new line. That's what I brought you down here for, and it's a good thing I thought of it. You will have to wait till to-morrow for definite instructions. The situation is not very clear yet. The old

## **"MY DEAR SON——"**

man holds off, but I expect to have him by morning. There are some other complications. I mean there are other people in it we did not think of. We shall need you, and by to-morrow we shall know where to start you in."

"It's rather confusing," she protested, somewhat petulantly. "I can't bear to be doing nothing, even in New York. Down here it would be worse than being in prison."

"You may find it compares more favorably," suggested Whitehead with an obvious grin. She took absolutely no notice of the remark and went on.

"As you seem to be so short of plans, however, let me give you one. Send me to the Trentin Juniors. I can happen in on them—measles at the hotel or something, and at least look the ground over in case you want them later. I met them in Normandy one summer—that time we were on the coal contracts. He seemed simple. Perhaps I could make a sudden arrival so effective I could stay on if it were necessary. Anyway, it would be a good place to work from until you know what you've got to deal with."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Whitehead—a good deal for him to say to those whom he used as his agents. "Take that up at once. We can get our feet placed, anyhow. How will you manage it?"

"That," she replied, "will be left to me, as usual. You will communicate in the new code?"

"Yes," answered Whitehead. She said nothing more, but bowed toward him as if to a stranger. Returning her adieu with one of like formality, he left

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

the station and returned on foot into the village, where he took rooms in the hotel as one of those who had come to town to see the launching of the Cruiser Twenty-Nine. He thought often of "ten-four-six-six Cortlandt," and felt that it was going to be a big game.

## CHAPTER IV

### AN UNINVITED GUEST

IT was launching day at the Yard when Emily Trentin, who had been sitting on her porch and gazing out at a very languid ocean, was aroused by a maid announcing luncheon. She went in and seated herself opposite her husband, who blew her a kiss as she took her chair.

"How are you, Emily?" he said, speaking with the careless cordiality of comradeship. "I haven't seen you for two days. Did you see the birds I sent home yesterday?"

"We shall eat a pair of them for dinner," she answered. "They were larded last night. The man said you made some splendid shots."

"The man is a good man," responded Trentin with a boyish laugh. "I think I go shooting more to hear his compliments of my marksmanship than to bring down game."

"Your father was here, too," she added.

"Ah!" said Trentin.

"He wanted us to come to the launching."

"And you accepted?"

"Yes; I told him I thought you would be glad to come."

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"Good girl! We shouldn't miss it. We ought to show ourselves—and it will really be worth while. She is the biggest contract the yard has ever had. I suppose they have planned to make a lot of money on her."

"I thought your father looked older," she said, resolved to do as much as her conscience demanded, and feeling that it commanded that. As she sat there opposite her husband and looked into his clear-eyed, untrammelled smile, she felt, as she always did, the physical vigor of him, the free, upstanding poise of his shapely head, the distinct air of out-and-out power and utter fearlessness which he unconsciously threw about and from himself. It was that sense of latent strength in him that made her love him—the sense that he could do anything he might choose. To-day a first glimmering suggestion that where that in him might appeal to the femininity of a woman it might win him only the contempt of men, made her remember what his father had said the afternoon before. She rebelled at the memory. All her love rose up against the word that had been spoken of its object. She wondered at her easy willingness to listen. She was ashamed to think that she had lifted but a small voice against the shipbuilder's arraignment. She counted swiftly over in her heart the thousand things she loved her husband for; for his cleanness, for his honorable dealing, for his gentleness, for his purity of thought, for the minor refinements of his taste in friends and things. For these that she alone knew best, she could laugh at his dislike of the grimy doings at the yard—the towering

## AN UNINVITED GUEST

greatness of a pure, love-worthy man against a mere indisposition to deal with common things. And yet—there was her conscience calling.

"I thought your father looked older."

"He has taken life hard," remarked Trentin. "That makes a difference. It wears you out."

"I wonder if we are grateful enough for what his wearing out has meant for us," she said. The recollection of the old man's broken face got between her and the fresh countenance before her. "Some day he must stop. We shall have to go on."

There was a quick step on the porch, and a woman's figure appeared in the open window and looked in at them. It was a smart figure, dressed with conspicuous care.

"*Bon jour, mes amis,*" it said, and added a rather brilliantly metallic laugh that ended in a peculiar high staccato note.

"It is Miss Von Bianchi," whispered Emily, with a look at Trentin. "Oh—how do you do!" she exclaimed with mechanical courtesy. "Do come in and lunch with us. Go around by the side door. The maid will meet you."

"Thank you so much!" cried Miss Von Bianchi, and left the window. Emily turned to Trentin.

"What shall we do if she wants to stay?" she asked.

"As you like," he answered. "She may not want to. I certainly hope not."

"We shall say we can't have her, then?"

"Certainly."



## THE MASTER BUILDERS

In another moment the girl was with them, filling the room with the excitement and the rush of her gay, semiforeign personality—that air of confidence touched with European flavor which Americans so like against their honest wills. In a whirl of laughing thanks and protestations she was seated with them at the table. The maid put on a third place.

“You see before you a damsel absolutely without a place to lay her head,” she announced. “Hence this sudden visit.”

“Oldport isn’t such a barren waste as that,” suggested Trentin, who had caught a glance from Emily.

“If you mean the hotel,” retorted Miss Von Bianchi, “there is a case of measles in the only available room. There is a launching or something to-morrow—or is it to-day? They simply turned me out. *Naturellement*, it is no place for me—and here I am!”

“We had no idea you were coming to Oldport,” said Emily, attempting thus to avoid what had been suggested to her by their visitor’s remark.

“Nor had I until the day before yesterday,” replied Miss Von Bianchi easily. “Think of it! *Je suis—rapide, n’est ce pas!*”

“Quite!” responded Emily. “Have you other friends here?”

“Not one!” exclaimed Miss Von Bianchi. “No one but you two delightful people. Oh, it is so nice to see you all again! You see, I remembered what you used to say about the New England coast—that summer when we met at Dieppe. So when my doctor in Washington said I must go away somewhere north,

## AN UNINVITED GUEST

this was my first thought—to be on the coast and to be near you. And so—*Eccomi qua*, here I am!”

“But the hotel—” began Trentin.

“It *was* disappointing,” agreed she. “That was such a lovely old room. *Ma!*”

Miss Von Bianchi shrugged her shoulders after the approved Italian method, and began sipping her chocolate hungrily. There was an unexpected silence, emphasized to irritation by the momentary cessation of her vibrant speech. For an instant no one moved. Then Trentin, who had ended his luncheon, sprang up and went to the window.

“We have a launching to-day at three,” he observed. “It is good weather.”

“How interesting!” cried Miss Von Bianchi. “A launching? Shall I see it?”

“You must drive over with us,” said Emily, who knew nothing else to say, though she hated herself for her lack of the courage to say what she felt.

“Ah—but my boxes and things,” protested Miss Von Bianchi. “You see, I must find a lodging before night.”

“Afterwards we will talk about that,” said Emily. “You must come back with us to tea.”

She went upstairs to dress, knowing perfectly well that the thing she had not dared stop at that first right moment of opportunity would be thrust upon her. Miss Von Bianchi was going to be asked to stay. She knew it, and despised herself as a slave to the conventions of hospitality. Yet, as she reviewed their brief acquaintance while dressing for the launching, she felt

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

that there might be another side to the thing, to mitigate its inconveniences. She heard her husband at his own preparations in the adjoining room.

After that chance meeting in Normandy letters had passed, once only, between herself and Bessie Von Bianchi. That which they had had in common with the summer group of youngsters, embassy secretaries, motorists, and retired English army men who fluttered about her fascinations, lost its savor when Emily returned to the less congenial air of Maine. Emily, not an easy correspondent under any circumstances, found nothing sufficiently sincere in the girl's communication to warrant more than a perfunctory answer. Then came a second letter, this time addressed to both Emily and Trentin. Somehow Trentin had answered it, for no reason other than that he liked writing and responded more quickly in every way than Emily could. It had been only a note, but flavored with his way of saying small things—a way as distinctive and light-some as was the face his wife had loved across their table. The next letter from Miss Von Bianchi was to Trentin himself, and after that the correspondence grew. It did not outgrow Emily's patience, because it did not interest her. Once or twice she had read the girl's letters—Trentin never concealed them from her—but she stopped it from sheer fatigue of following a wearisome ability to paraphrase nothing in many words.

Yet sometimes Emily had wondered at the constancy of this apparent friendship. She knew Trentin's easy-going nature invariably found close acquaintance bur-

## AN UNINVITED GUEST

densome, though superior attractions sometimes maintained his interest beyond its usual limits. Once for a year he had kept up connections with an unkempt book dealer who happened to have a certain way of quoting the verse of François Villon. Now perhaps here was an opportunity to bring this new interest to an end by driving him straight in the face of just such a fatigue as she herself had felt. She was wise enough to consider an end of it desirable, while woman in plenty to carry it off with good grace while it endured. Trentin's remarkable fineness of heart simplified the problem—rendered it no problem but only a matter of her own wish. She believed she might urge the girl to stay, and surfeit Trentin with those shallow trickeries of speech and thought which thrive so well on ink and paper, but languish and die when put in spoken words.

Emily was first down and ready for the start. Trentin was still above, and she had sent Miss Von Bianchi up to her dressing room to prepare. She went out on the porch to look at the glory of the afternoon. Then there was a step in the side path, and she saw the postmaster's head above the rail.

"O Mr. Pinnot," she said. "Won't you come up? Did you walk down in the heat?"

"Thanky, ma'am," responded the postmaster coming around to the front and mounting the steps. She noticed that he wore the official Prince Albert. "It is b'ilin' hot, ain't it? I'd give a doughnut to be offshore where there's a breeze o' wind, but it's a master good day for a launchin'."

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

He sat down, fanning himself with his hat. He sopped his beaded face with a large handkerchief, and afterwards ran it around the inner band of the hat. Something in the way he did those little things attracted Emily's attention. She combined them with the unusual hour of his visit, and wondered why he had come so far in a direction opposite the great fact of the day in Oldport.

"Mr. Pinnot," she said suddenly, "you came here to tell me something. What is it?"

His surprise betrayed him. He sat back heavily in the chair, and sopped his head again. He knew her eyes were on him, and looked off to sea to get away from them. He hoped she would say something more to create a little delay; but she said nothing. Various indecisive phrases appeared to his mind, and availed nothing. His one swear-word stood out familiarly, a rock in a weary land.

"By tidy!" he ejaculated, letting himself go at last, "this bein' postmaster an' justice o' the peace an' a little of everything to everybody ain't what it's cracked up to be!"

"Please tell me," urged Emily.

The postmaster laid down his straw hat slowly, and put the handkerchief on top of it. Then from an inner pocket of the Prince Albert he drew the paper he had found on Mr. Trentin's desk the evening before, unfolded it carefully, and handed it open to Emily.

"My dear son—" she read aloud. "What is it?"

"It was goin' to be a letter, I guess," replied the

## **AN UNINVITED GUEST**

postmaster. "It was goin' to be, but it wa'n't. He didn't leave nothin' else that we know of."

Emily folded the paper again, and got up and walked to the end of the porch. She leaned on the rail there. Her knees shook so that she could hardly stand. Without being told, she understood the meaning of the message and of Mr. Pinnot's visit. She knew that it meant Mr. Trentin, and that he was dead. Rather than of the present moment, she was thinking of how he had come to her the afternoon before, of what he had said, and what he had intended her to hear and to remember. She was full of sorrow for him, and she was full of fear for what they had to face without him. Now that he was gone she realized that he had stood between them and all things hostile. They would have to breast the world in earnest—no more idle afternoons in the cool shade of the old pine trees, no more long shooting days. They must take his place. Hector must take his father's place, and she must stand with him and help him. Perhaps she must drive him, at the start. But he should do it. It was in him—the courage and the clear head and the strength. Surely, that day they had talked of yesterday—his day—had come!

She walked back firmly to the postmaster, as firmly as she had ever taken a step in all her life.

"How did it happen?" she asked.

"He was just found that way—at the Yard, at his desk," replied the postmaster. "I was the one that found him. He started to write that, and couldn't finish. Dr. Philbrick took charge. Everything is all

## THE MASTER BUILDERS

right. Nobody knows—yit. Nobody ain't goin' to know till after the launchin'; but I cal'lated it was better to tell you beforehand. It'll save askin' a lot o' questions, an' what folks don't know never hurts 'em. You needn't worry just yit. I'll stand by—just in case."

He rose and put on his hat.

"That's all for the present, ain't it?" he said. "You've got the paper?"

"Yes," answered Emily. "Thank you for coming. Afterwards, we will have a talk."

"Aye, aye, sir!" he responded. He went down the steps and on toward the turn in the path, where he halted and came back.

"You'll excuse me, Mis' Trentin," he said, "I should ha' said: 'Aye, aye, *ma'am!*'"

"Yes," said Emily. "I understand."

She heard her husband coming down, and calling to her cheerily. Miss Von Bianchi followed so closely that they came out on the porch together; but she had had her strained half minute and was ready for them.

"You must not loiter," she said, with her usual quiet amiability. "They launch the cruiser at three, and it is well on toward two now."

"What a treat!" cried Miss Von Bianchi. "You were so nice to ask me!"

"We really don't launch an armored cruiser every day," remarked Trentin. "Has my father sent any special word?" he asked of Emily.

"No," she replied. "Mr. Pinnot came over to say things were in order."

## ***AN UNINVITED GUEST***

"My father and Harrison will do the honors for the Yard," he said. "It is a relief. I don't fancy ceremonies."

"Everything will be done," responded Emily. "The station wagon will be here in a moment to take us."

Trentin strolled through into the library and, taking up a light target pistol which lay uncased on his table, went with it to an open side window. A sparrow was feeding luxuriously on a patch of corn meal which had been sprinkled on the grass some thirty yards away. Trentin threw the pistol into position and, seeming not to have taken even a casual aim, shot off the bird's head.

"That's a hundred and sixteen—no, seventeen—this season," he remarked to Emily, who had watched him through the other window. He blew the smoke from the pistol and put it down. "I'm improving, Emily."

"Evidently," said she.



## CHAPTER V

### THE LAUNCHING

THEY drove away in the station wagon, and whirled through the village to the harbor where the shipyards lay. Miss Von Bianchi's sprightly comments on the aspect of the town gave Emily some respite. She had time to compose something like a definite plan. Trentin was a master of every sort of small talk, and liked to deal in it. Their guest betrayed nothing but the excitement of complete self-satisfaction. They drove in at the high gates of the Yard and stopped at the offices, where the launching party was to assemble. A clerk handed Emily a note as she left the carriage. After reading it she threw it away.

"They want you and me to see the governor and his party through," she said to Trentin. "It will be very simple. Come—you remember the governor, Hector. Let us go in."

In another moment they were in the midst of the uniforms and gay feminine apparel of the official visitors who had arrived just before them in a midday boat. They began apologizing for their tardiness, while Miss Von Bianchi allowed herself to become the captive of half a dozen warriors of the governor's

## THE LAUNCHING

staff, with a less showy and markedly more reticent background of regular navy men.

Once Trentin left the group of men who had gathered about him and got Emily at one side and asked her if she had seen his father. The shipbuilder's absence annoyed him. People were asking for him, and his pride was jarred.

"He couldn't have been so weak on a day like this!" he said to Emily in the few seconds he could snatch her from the others. "But I can't explain it. Will everything go well?"

"There isn't time for explanations," whispered Emily. "Don't mind about it. We must carry it off as if we understood his not being here. Hurry back. They are looking around for you."

As they moved out through the Yard in a chattering procession to mount the launching platform, Trentin's eyes followed his wife, walking between the governor and the navy captain who was expected to command the cruiser when she was ready for sea. He loved the confident poise of her body. His fear that his father's lifelong inability to resist some of the more obvious of human temptations might involve them in shame at this most critical moment, was swept out of his mind. As ever, the thing would be well done. He made a laughing answer to some jibe from a neighboring officer who had known him at Annapolis.

As they approached the rough wooden stairway leading to the stage about the cruiser's bows, Trentin and the governor were thrown together for an instant.

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"Everyone is sorry your father could not be here, Mr. Trentin," he said, with perhaps a little too much wisdom evident in the kindness of his manner. "But Mrs. Trentin and you leave absolutely nothing else to be desired. Only, I wanted to see the man who actually built this ship, here in our own State."

Trentin's laugh attracted Emily so quickly that he knew she had been listening. With a swift smile which immediately drew the governor's attention to herself, she left the party of girls who had surrounded her on the staging and came over to Trentin's side. Then chance saved them the need of explanations. They were joined by a fairly tall man with big shoulders and a thick little mustache set in the center of a rather hard and very chunky and muscular face. That he wore no coat in all that gayety seemed not a bit to be upon his mind. His shirt-sleeved arms were canted sharp on either side of him, and his hands were thrust, with bulging, hard-clenched fists, into his trousers pockets. A faded necktie twisted half around under the edge of a very much turned-down dark blue linen collar had suffered beyond endurance from the streams of beady perspiration which poured over its wearer's cheeks and chin. A bunch of blunted pencils and several carpenter's folding rules were stuck into the upper pockets of a waistcoat, the lower bounds of which had risen superior to the strong demands of the neighboring nether garment. It was a hot, a heedless, and a very useful looking figure. Its head aimed here and there—aimed instead of turning on its body—like that of a well-trained bulldog just thrown into a ring

## **THE LAUNCHING**

—jerkily, alertly, with a suggestion of advancing under jaw.

“Here, Governor,” said Trentin, “is the man who actually built the cruiser. You said you wanted to see him. Harrison, this is Governor Warner. He wants to know the man who really put together the Number Twenty-Nine.”

“Glad to see you,” responded Harrison shortly, without taking his fists from his pockets or waiting for preliminaries. He swung around and pointed his head at the governor in a manner peculiarly suggestive to that personage that the real builder of the Cruiser Twenty-Nine had his mind on greater things at that special time.

“Ah—” began the governor, in his best reception-room manner.

“Sure!” exclaimed Harrison cordially. “She isn’t done yet, but when she is, she’s going to be all ship. That’s the way I built her to be.”

It was clear that he then removed all thought of the governor from his mind. He turned abruptly to Emily, who had remained at Trentin’s side looking on and interested in the governor’s impressions as reflected in his somewhat sensitive face.

“Everything is ready,” said Harrison. “Just have the bottle thrown good and hard as she starts. I’ll allow ten minutes from now. That’s all.”

He wheeled and disappeared in the expectant crowd. One or two of the men whispered to each other that he had not given either a word or look at Trentin. He left an impression of wonderfully intelligent insolence.

## THE MASTER BUILDERS

The governor made an unsuccessful effort to laugh it down.

"He *looks* able, anyway!" he remarked, rather avoiding both the Trentins. Then his astonishment took its own way. "Why, I never heard of the man!" he added.

"That isn't the point," replied Trentin, laughing back at his Excellency in a fearless way that in some strange sort reminded the governor of the very things that made him resent Harrison's air of independence. "He does the hard work. He works for the Yard as if he were doing it for himself. That's why we are proud of him."

"Quite naturally, sir," responded the governor, and made off to mingle with the ladies.

Trentin, to whom one launching was dismally like another, turned toward the outer railing of the stage and hooked a long, straw-tipped cigarette from his silver case. Emily ran up to him and slipped her arm through his. Their backs were toward the launching party.

"Boy," she whispered, "you were perfectly wonderful. I loved you for the way you said that about Harrison."

"Why?" he asked, pinching her wrist and laughing close into her face, tenderly. "I imagine it was the right sort of thing. Some one ought to have the credit. It isn't ours—except we pay off. It was what father would have said, probably."

She only squeezed his arm, and ran back to the place where some girls were preparing to break wine on the

## **THE LAUNCHING**

receding bow of the ship. Before actually joining them, she threw back at her husband a look of very high reward. He leaned on the platform and began smoking. He turned his back on immediate conditions and surveyed the scene below him.

From the very base of the staging out to the uttermost confines of the Yard, men and women and children were jammed into every available foot of space where they could find a sticking place. All the shops were shut down, and the workmen clustered on points of special vantage, some of them with their families brought in for the occasion. The village band occupied an important position on the flat roof of the boiler house, the black plumes of their hats blowing and shimmering in the summer breeze. Outside the high red palings of the company fence every house had eager spectators in its windows. Very much nearer, the town photographer had set up his tripod and was aiming his apparatus for the critical instant when the ship slid down the ways. Speckling the pack, like flowers on a hillside, Trentin saw the white dresses and brightly colored ribbons of young girls who came in their best apparel to celebrate the day; and their laughter was borne up to him, even above the growing chatter of those about his own position. In several corners, secluded from all save his idly busy eyes, he could see thrifty citizens taking luncheon from damp and overloaded pasteboard boxes, the débris of which already littered the narrow grassplots about the office building. Along the rear of the machine shop, which offered plenteous shade, a row of farm horses with

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

\*  
covered carriages were picketed. Here and there, in the few areas not captured by the multitude, the usual small boys made noisy profit of the minutes while the tide was coming to the flood. It was all very interesting and characteristic, seen through Trentin's blue cigarette smoke. He wondered why his father had chosen to miss it. The Number Twenty-Nine was the Yard's star contract, the first ship of her weight, whatever her weight was, to be built in America, and the naval wonder of all that portion of the world sufficiently civilized to be bloodthirsty in pursuit of gain. He remembered that in an inspiration of unusual interest in a craft so mighty, he had sailed his boat down to the Yard one morning and been refused by Harrison when he asked to see her designs; and that even his father had evaded the matter when it was referred to him. Mystery like that meant something to Trentin's strong imagination. From where he stood he could see posted along dead walls through the Yard the now-familiar warning to visitors, that they must not approach the high board fence which had been set around the cruiser's hull as a screen. Even from the launching platform no one could see her lines. Trentin wondered again that his father should absent himself, and guessed that his failure to appear might be connected with the general mystery of their greatest work. Under a shed he saw a long row of irregular cylinders partly covered with boards and tarred paper, guns of yet unknown caliber waiting to be mounted when the ship was ready. He had heard Emily say there were rush orders on the job, and that when the cruiser left

## THE LAUNCHING

Oldport Harbor she was to be prepared for actual service should that be necessary.

Some one called him. The people began moving back to let a pretty young woman reach the front. As she stood with her beribboned bottle and her slender figure close up against the towering prow of the ship, the dull garnet of the steel setting off the dazzling white muslin of her dress, Trentin realized for the first time what a tremendous thing the cruiser was, and understood very much clearer than he had ever before been able to understand, the true meaning of the genius which in spite of its own shortcomings had directed the construction of the mighty hull.

From below there came the sound of the sledges striking irregularly. A shrill whistle echoed. Emily standing by the girl's side, touched her gently on one arm. In the next moment not a sound could be heard by anyone. Then from somewhere far down came a crackling, grinding crash.

"Now!" cried Emily.

Just as the sharp prow began moving, the governor's daughter threw the bottle against it, and the wine burst from the shattered glass and ran foaming down the cruiser's side.

There was nothing more. The ship took added mystery from the fact that she had been christened with no name. The cheering and the band and the steam whistles had possession. Trentin looked out into the new vacancy before them. It seemed as if the launching platform must topple over and be drawn after the rapidly receding hull. She seemed greater



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

to Trentin than ever as she lurched into the water, her four tall funnels overtopping any mast in the harbor, and her body showing its speedy lines as she settled toward her natural depth. The wonder of it was upon him as they left the platform, and all the busy afternoon he could not drive it from his mind. The helter-skelter sentiments of the earlier hours were nothing to him. He could not think of himself at all—only of the greatness of the giant ship and that she bore the mark of his house and his name, and would, perhaps, fight to sustain it on many seas.

Miss Von Bianchi's preoccupation with the lighter features of the day and Emily's desire to leave him to his thoughts, gave Trentin an unusual opportunity for the thinking which he habitually avoided.

"Emily," he said, when they were on their own porch again, in the last hours of the day, and alone, "would you take a little walk with me?"

The request surprised her. He had not asked such a thing in years. But she risked nothing in mere quibble, and they started away at once. Emily let him lead where he liked, and followed him along the shore to a rocky path by which they presently climbed to a wooded bluff below the village where they could look both up the harbor and to sea. Until they reached there, nothing was said by either. They gazed out at the darkening ocean for some minutes, soothed, after that day, by the lap of the waves upon the rocks below them, and the gentle touch of the new night wind, all cool about. Trentin moved near, and took one of his wife's hands and held it while they waited in the quiet. Surely,

## THE LAUNCHING

at that moment they were very much to one another.

"Miss Von Bianchi is going to stay?" he asked, after a time.

"I suppose so," she said. "I see no way out of it. Probably she will soon tire of so dull a place as Oldport. After a day like this the contrast will be greater."

"I hope so," he said. "I hope she will go. I would have liked—" she did not remember that she had ever before seen him hesitate upon his choice of words; but he halted, and then went on, "I would have liked to have you alone for a while."

It was a new thing for him to say, and she only pressed his hand and waited. She was a wise woman and a good wife.

Suddenly he turned and held her up to him.

"Sweetheart!" he said, and kissed her; and she thrilled at that, but wondered very much.

"Emily," he said, still holding her, "I have had a thought, and it is not a comfortable one. It was strange to stand there to-day, and see those fellows I knew at the academy years ago—little chaps then; and now they are going to sea in big ships that we build for them. When I looked at that cruiser to-day I thought it was a finer thing to put her together than anything I know. If we are going to be proud of those academy fellows some day, what are we going to say of the man who built the ship when she comes to a war and does her work as he alone knew she would do it because he built his heart into her! I never realized before what

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

my father has been achieving all these years, and that while he has been achieving I have been enjoying the other side of life. I have enjoyed it. There is nothing like the woods and the sea and the everything a man can find out of doors. But to-day I wondered if there could be any sport in the world so fine as making a ship like that and seeing her do her work as you made her to do it.

“And I thought that a man who could build ships like that must have a great deal of soul in him somewhere. I have never helped my father. We never had anything in common. He always preferred the Yard and the hotel, and sneered at my preference for different things. I never cared for him. His manner of living killed my mother when I was a very little boy. After that he was a better man, but not my kind of man. And I was never his kind. Still if we could get at the genius that made that ship, I can see why he preferred the Yard. If it were in me I might do it, too. To-night, after what we saw there, I don’t much like to remember that for six months I haven’t been near the Yard; and he needs me, Emily, or I might make him need me. He is getting old. You told me so this morning. I wonder——”

He stopped. She feared the spark was flickering out.

“Go on, Boy,” she said, pressing his hands.

“I wonder,” he continued, “what it is in our blood that trips us up all the time—why we who have a lot of power over things have never been able to exercise much of it over ourselves. If we can build ships like

## ***THE LAUNCHING***

that we ought to be able to build some of the same stuff into our character. Emily——”

He dropped her hands and threw his shoulders back in a tremendous gesture of great purpose.

“Emily, I believe I might do that! I believe I might take the lead, and show them all the way!”

So this was her time to strike him. Almost pityingly she drew out the last message of his father and held it ready in her hand. This was her time to strike him. They simply had to stand forward now. He had to take the lead.

“I knew you would come to that,” she said, very gravely and trying to order her words so that he would feel her confidence and be inspired by it. “Harrison is coming over to-night, now that the ship is off. We shall have to speak about your father’s affairs, and see what is to be done. The reason why he was not at the launching——” she waited to subdue a pang of sorrow for the hurt she must give him, and then went on, “was that he was found last evening at the Yard——”

Trentin struck his hands together in a gesture of anger and chagrin.

“Again!” he exclaimed.

“Not that this time, Boy,” she said, putting her hands on his shoulders, as if to steady him. “This time he was dead.”

Trentin looked at her speechless. More than once his lips began a word, and let it pass. Then, after some time, he said, very quietly:

“You are sure it is true?”

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"Yes," she answered, holding out the paper. "He left you only this."

Trentin read and reread the uncompleted sentence written in his father's wavering hand: "My dear son—" All at once he saw the real meaning of that day to her.

"And you knew it all that time!" he said in wonder. "Pinnot must have told you—and you went through with everything like that!"

"Some one had to go through with it," said Emily. "There will be enough for you, afterwards. His place must be filled; the work must go on. It is what you were speaking of a moment ago, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," he replied, and she was sorry to have that answer. He turned back along the path by which they had come, and walked toward the house. Emily followed. There was nothing she could do but wait for him to work out his own conclusions, to say whether or not his vision saw the dawn of his own day. She could not intrude on his privilege of choice.

Harrison was awaiting them at the house.

"How are you, Harrison," said Trentin as they met on the porch. "Come in."

"What for?" asked Harrison. He wore a coat now, but his fists were still in his pockets, and he looked only more aggressive than the governor had found him at the hour of the launching.

"We must talk about the business," said Trentin. "We must make plans for going on—for taking care of things and—for going on. You must tell me about that. These three words are all he left us."

## ***THE LAUNCHING***

Harrison laughed. He had a high, crackling voice that was unpleasant. There was no feeling of any kind in it. It was sound without meaning. But he took the paper when Trentin handed it him.

"I'll do the talking, I guess," he said. "That was all I came over for to-night—just to say that when I was ready I would let you know. I've been running the Yard a good while now, and I'll keep right on for the present."

"Under our direction—that is, under my direction," corrected Trentin.

"Under nobody's direction but my own!" declared Harrison. He shot out his canine jaw and gave both of them a savage look. "You understand that, and you remember it! What do you know about the business?"

"I admit—" began Trentin.

"Of course you do," interrupted Harrison. He had a way of working himself into a violent temper, which Emily could see plainly rising. "You don't know anything about it, and you've never tried to find out. I know! It's been my business for a long time. You've been drawing monthly allowances while I kept the Yard going. Now we're bankrupt."

"Bankrupt!" repeated Trentin incredulously. "I don't believe it!"

"I didn't think you would," replied Harrison. He drew some typewritten sheets from his coat pocket, threw them on the wicker tea table, and restored his hands to their original position. "So I brought you over something to read. You'll find it all there."

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

What I want to say is that it's the truth. We are about the same as bankrupt. The Yard hasn't been able to take in enough cash to keep the Trentin family and the business going at once. We shall gain a good deal now that he's dead, for there'll be a saving there of a good many hundred a week. How much we can afford to keep on allowing you I don't know yet. If I have good luck, I can keep your allowance up for a while. If I don't, it will be cut down. You may be able to save some of it by going to work in the office. I'm going to cut down a lot there."

"I object—" began Trentin again; but Harrison's ugly mood was bound to have its way, and again he broke in in his insolent voice:

"You can object as much as you want to," he said, "but you've got to face the facts. You don't know the first details of the business—I know them all. We are on the ragged edge of bankruptcy, and if I let go, or if you take hold—and that's all the same thing—we'll simply drop over it. Keep your hands off and I'll work it out. You know I've got the interest to do it. Who is it that's been driving her all these years—you or me? You needn't think I'm going to see her break down now!"

He turned and walked toward the steps, and waited there a moment. He had the shipbuilder's last message in his hand, and looked down at it cynically.

"Think it over," he added. "Read the figures and think it over. You'll see I'm right. I've got to have my way. You've got to leave it to me. I'll keep your allowance up if I have good luck—and feel like it.

## ***THE LAUNCHING***

You read the figures and I guess you'll be mighty glad to be good."

He cast back at them another contemptuous laugh, and went down the steps and away. Emily's glance did not follow him—she had hardly seen him through all the interview. She had been watching her husband, and from the very last depth of her she felt his failure to grapple with Harrison and teach him in that one vital moment who held the master hand in their affairs.

Trentin moved forward and took up the papers Harrison had left, listlessly and without any genuine interest. He was a living admission that Harrison had been right.

There was a brief silence, and it was broken by their guest. Miss Von Bianchi appeared in the doorway too unexpectedly.

"Oh, have you heard the terrible news!" she cried.

It was a fine pretense, but Emily, particularly alert in that tense hour, knew that she had been eavesdropping from just within the house.

Without caring much to look at each other, they went in to prepare for a most unhappy dinner.



## CHAPTER VI

### A SURPRISINGLY EASY LOAN

**T**HE next morning Bessie Von Bianchi left the house in Cottage Road. Emily alone met her at breakfast, and asked her to leave them to themselves. Mr. Pinnot and Furbish, the Trentin coachman, took her away in the station wagon to the train. Then Emily went in search of her husband, whom she had not seen since the night before. He was in his own room, sleeping quietly. The papers Harrison had left them lay beside his bed. She called him and waited for him to come down. When he entered the library, where they usually had breakfast, she sprang to her feet in amazed disappointment. He wore his shooting clothes.

"You don't mean you're going to shoot to-day!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," he answered, with a kind of shamefaced determination. "I've been studying Harrison's figures until my head spins. I need a day in the woods to get through the funeral to-morrow."

"I hoped we might talk about things," said Emily. For the moment she almost loathed him. She could not bear to see him fail them.

"There would be no use in it," he responded. "I

## **A SURPRISINGLY EASY LOAN**

have been over the figures. Harrison is right. Moreover, he has us in his power. If we interfere, he can ruin the Yard. He can do some little thing that will ruin us. Let him alone and he will keep us going, and the Yard, too. I saw that in his visit yesterday. If I try to prevent it, the next we know I shall be doing assistant bookkeeping at the Yard and we shall have to give up everything—give up the house, and everything.”

“Well—” said Emily. She wanted to lash him into life, and she could not do it. She wanted to hate him, and instead she loved him and could not shame him into pain.

“We may as well let him go on, then,” added Trentin. “When things are better off, we can deal with him. So—” he smiled agreeably on her and attacked a corn muffin with great relish—“so I’m going up on the Ridge and try the birds.”

She left him at his breakfast, and went upstairs and found Harrison’s figures. After a time Trentin called a good-by up to her, and she heard him go out. Then she folded up the papers and got her hat and called Furbish to drive her to the Yard. A boy showed her where Harrison was, and she went in.

“Good morning, Harrison,” she said, “I came to ask you to explain your figures a little.”

He grinned, and pushed a chair toward her without himself leaving his own.

“I want to learn about things, and be a help,” she continued. “You were right last night—we understand that. If we have to cut down, every little bit

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

will help you; and if I can be used I am ready. You must run the Yard—we want you to do that. No one else can run it. But where we can help you, we want to do our part.”

“You had to come to it!” he said, grinning at her again.

“Yes,” she answered, and bravely forced herself to make a willing smile.

Oldport Harbor labored through another winter—through the chill and dusty dreariness of November, the snowy merrymaking of Christmas time, the thundering storms of February that blasted the north coast and tore up the country, leaving behind them their wide wake of glistening drifts. But day by day through all of it, that which was being accomplished at the Trentin Yard was never halted. The Number Twenty-Nine grew out of the clumsy hulk of her maidenhood steadily toward that full and abundant maturity of charm and power that has given ships the right to sex.

The goose bone and the woodchuck were consulted with an interest blending both long experience and high good hope. Sunday services were conducted whenever a choir and a quorum were able to dig their way through the heaped-up roads. Somehow, work and life went on, souls departed and were sent on their way rejoicing in the faith; and, somehow, other souls were delivered into the little world to the delight of the gossiping hamlet, if not to that of accommodating Dr. Philbrick. And when the March rains came, and

## **A SURPRISINGLY EASY LOAN**

the mastery of winter broke in a flood of angry and tempestuous tears, Oldport found itself looking back with satisfaction on a New Year festival and some incalculable miles of well-dried apples, and forward in expectation of the spring.

Emily's visits to the Yard grew in frequency until by the season's end she was going over every week day when the roads were clear. Harrison had soon learned to value her advice. Trentin did not annoy her with questions, nor did she burden him with reports. He knew only that as the result of her labors something had been saved from his father's estate, and that work on the mysterious fighting ship into which every resource of the Yard was put was going on uninterruptedly. Emily's hope for him had gradually been overshadowed by her own enthusiasm. Sometimes she was glad he had refused the battle, that she could have it to her own hand. And as her own liking for the Yard increased so did Trentin's complacency wax into full acceptance of the fact. No one asked anything of him now, as no one had ever asked anything before. He lived his own life and was content. An uneasiness he had felt in the first days—even that was dispelled by Emily's manner toward him. She had never been more tender. She had never before talked with him in such frank indulgence of his favorite doings—even of his new guns. He was sensible of a deep change in her manner. She impressed him as having bloomed with some new flower of life, of having become more full of physical vigor. Her good-night kiss was less the mild salute of comradeship, and made him tingle with the

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

sense of the woman back of it. Her presence radiated something snapping, electrical, arousing, and intensely warm. He remembered her pale, calm afternoons with her embroideries on the shaded porch, and thought that she had come to be more like the strong farm women who mothered many children and sold him cool milk while babies clung about their skirts. She appealed to him with a new richness of meaning. It sent him singing through the wooded hills. In those days he sang more than he shot, for clear bodily exhilaration. In the rough time of February he took to writing verses. Emily strove on, happy in occupation, so full of her own strength that it was scarcely more than a matter of days when she had forgotten her shame of him. And this to them was that winter.

Trentin wrote a weekly letter to Bessie Von Bianchi, less of a personal response to her initial lead than a joint reply, filled with harmless banterings, from him and Emily. The regular and somewhat bulky envelopes that came in return were addressed in his name. So much Emily knew. She was not too absorbed in her work to appreciate the situation and be watchful of it; but, while losing sight of nothing, she bided her time and let him have his way. What she might have thought of his conduct at a different time was nothing to her desire to watch the case play itself out. The new powers that had entered into her since she began going to the Yard made her laugh at fear. Without being in the least stolid in her nature, she possessed that strain of common sense, unusual among women,

## **A SURPRISINGLY EASY LOAN**

which taught her to be content with the end rather than with the means of attaining it. She declined to quarrel with Fate, the master meddler; and that her winter's work was better for this self-restraint no one familiar with conditions at the Yard could have denied.

To Harrison, whose mind had been trained to the machine shop rather than to finance and the economies of trade, she was not only the helm, but the helmsman. Their daily meetings became conferences of ever-increasing duration, and, what was of infinitely less importance under the circumstances, of wider scope. Already they found themselves speculating on other contracts to be bid for when the Twenty-Nine was done. Then the trouble came.

"I once read in a newspaper," remarked Emily, standing by the library window without apparent purpose, "that ten million dollar bills laid end to end would reach from here nearly to the moon."

"That's the mooniest observation I've heard you make since—well, a great many years ago," replied Trentin, leaving his table and coming over to her. "What set you thinking of moons and money in the broad daylight of an April morning?"

"April mornings," she retorted, "can be made to be the most expensive of luxuries. How have you been getting the value of this one?"

"I've done a verse or two, had a dash at my water-color, and killed ten very kindly sparrows, besides eating and digesting your cook's most agreeable breakfast! Am I rewarded?"

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"When will the sonnet be ready to read?" she asked.

He dropped his arm quickly from where he had placed it around her shoulders as he was speaking.

"Please don't get on that again, Emily!" he said a little sharply. "Do try to have some patience with artistic ideals, even if you cannot—or I really meant to say, do not, understand them."

"Well, then, as a mere matter of history, when was the sonnet begun?"

He did not respond, but returned to the table and began whittling a pencil sulkily. For a few minutes there was no other sound than the scraping of his knife. Then Emily came from the window and leaned on the other side of the table, gazing down at him.

"Boy," she said, with more than a suggestion of tenderness, "will you ever be able to stop playing, and let yourself grow up?"

"If you mean to get myself onto the treadmill of daily labor, I don't expect to be able to," he said cheerfully. "Why should I? Do you suppose anyone would make a machine of himself if he didn't have to? Why should I?"

"Among other excellent reasons," she responded, "when your father's sudden death some months ago left the Yard in such confusion, Harrison made certain predictions which to-day are rapidly coming true. We can handle the small work, but the big Cruiser Twenty-Nine is using more money than we have in hand or can get by advance payments from the Government,

## **A SURPRISINGLY EASY LOAN**

and there are special reasons for completing her on time. The reputation of the Yard is one of the reasons. She will lead the whole world, Harrison says. And another reason is the war talk, which you know something more about. Under ordinary circumstances we could hold the work back on some pretext; for on account of the shortage of men in the fleet we haven't even an inspection officer with us. But as it is, we must make ourselves able to push work even faster than we are pushing it now."

Trentin lighted a cigarette.

"Emily, dear," he replied amiably, and blowing out a cloud of smoke as he tilted back his chair, "you are a most remarkable woman. You can at one and the same moment assume an attitude of righteous indignation toward my unwillingness to convert myself into a sweating beast of burden like other men you happen to have known; and, without a trace of difficulty, pass immediately into the discussion of a thoroughly iniquitous and unmoral plan to retard contract work and gain time and money on the Government! I don't mind your impatience with me—give yourself no concern as to that! I like you too much to be really angered by it, and anger is distressing, without compensation. But I shouldn't wish to see the Yard hold back Government work to save money. Even my father never did that—I don't believe he ever did. By all means, Harrison should be made to press on as rapidly as possible."

"I'm glad we agree so far," she said. "I'm glad your verses haven't blinded your business sense." He



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

was never quite sure of her sarcasm, and looked up suspiciously; but she only smiled with perfect candor and continued: "We really must push on—as rapidly as possible. We can meet this week's bills for construction material, and pay off the crews in all departments. We can place cash orders for new equipment in the casting shop, and get the indispensable machinery working there in from two to three months—and we can't complete the ship unless we do. After that—do you mind listening very carefully? After that we shall have to shut down the yard and go into bankruptcy unless we can have two hundred thousand dollars in the bank within fifteen days from now!"

Trentin's cigarette burned itself down, untouched, to the telltale ash which marked its exclusive quality.

"Two hundred thousand dollars!" he repeated, not appreciatively. "Haven't we it—ourselves—somewhere?"

His wife's reply, whatever it might have been, was stopped by the entrance of a maid.

"Mr. Harrison telephones that you are to come over to the Yard as soon as you can, Mrs. Trentin," she announced.

"We have to face it, you see," said Emily, when the servant had withdrawn. "Come, let us go over and see what the situation really is."

"You go, Emily," urged Trentin. "I'm not so much on business, and these verses are going well to-day—interruptions are annoying—you go. You're twice the man I am for this sort of thing. Let me know about it. I'm always interested, of course.

## ***A SURPRISINGLY EASY LOAN***

Harrison can get the money somehow if he has to. You make him!"

He was already fingering his pencil when she left the room to order the dogcart out.

When she opened the door of the company offices half an hour afterwards, Emily saw, through the open entrance to the inner room, two men seated at opposite sides of a drawing table. One of them was Harrison, and he rose quickly and came out to meet her.

"It's Whitehead, to see about his yacht," said he. "Maybe we can land him. He loaned us a good deal once before. Come in, and be careful. He's foxy."

The rapidity of Harrison's manner left her not a jot of time for either questions or replies.

"I remember you very well indeed," she was saying to Mr. Whitehead a moment later. He was easier to talk to than the Oldport Harbor men. She wondered how it was that well-cut clothes could have so close a relation to ease of speech. "You were with us for dinner when the yacht was launched—wasn't it two years ago? When are the repairs to be completed?"

"Hardly repairs, Mrs. Trentin," he corrected. "She doesn't need repairing so soon—that isn't the Trentin way of doing things, is it? A little overhauling, that is all—and I wanted to get her off ahead of time and be away South and out of all this talk of war. Harrison says he is behind on things, though."

"We—I think they're rather driven on the cruiser," said Emily. "It's their great contract—excepting your steamer, you know."

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

He laughed, and then said, unexpectedly :

"Is your husband at the head of things here now? I suppose he is. He will carry the business right on, no doubt."

She recognized it instantly as a feeler prematurely thrown out.

"I suppose so—why, of course," she replied, smiling toward both men unconcernedly. Harrison read her signal. She was too sure of it to interfere by further parleying.

"You see, Mr. Whitehead," began Harrison, "we want to rush the cruiser ahead of everything. There's going to be a war. We're handicapped by lack of capital. The machine shop needs a dozen new tools, the power plant ought to be doubled to drive them, and the working force ought to be doubled, too. You can't buy machine tools now without the cash in hand. We want a sizable loan, to be made available within one week."

"How secured?" asked Mr. Whitehead.

"By first mortgages on the plant and business."

"For how long?"

"Long as we need it."

"Of course it's what you need," observed Mr. Whitehead. "You can't get Government money fast enough and there's a lot tied up in the cruiser."

"Yes—and we want to bid on several new contracts within the next six months."

"Certainly," agreed the visitor. "Well"—he dropped into his chair by the table again and drew breath comfortably—"where are you going to get the money?"

## ***A SURPRISINGLY EASY LOAN***

"Why not take it on yourself?" suggested Harrison.

"How much?"

"Two hundred thousand—or so."

Mr. Whitehead whipped out a pencil and wrote the sum down upon the paper covering of the drawing table. After the final cipher he jabbed a deep decimal into the white surface, threw down the pencil and looked up. Both the others were gazing at him with expectations too apparent to be concealed; but if he realized that he had trapped them into that much betrayal of their situation, he did not indicate anything. He only said, in his most impenetrable tone:

"When and how do you want it?"

It was too sudden for Emily. She had been shamed by the dread of having to plead in divers difficult and unwholesome places for the means to save the Yard. She had read of unpleasant happenings to women who depended too heavily on the chivalry of money-lending men. She had prepared for a fight, and had encountered a favor. For the moment the dramatic element in her recent interview with her husband seemed ridiculously melodramatic, and she needlessly attentive to his unwillingness to bear a hand. And yet, the plain truth that something besides her own and Harrison's skill had lifted their burden remained visible to her all the time, and in the next few minutes while the men were discussing the details it served to clear her mind and left her alive not only to the strange developments of the immediate present, but the pressing labors of their early future. As she readjusted herself to the

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

new conditions, she withdrew behind the veil of caution which is ever of use to well-trained women, and expressed her personal thanks to Mr. Whitehead in a calm, if by no means distant, manner.

"Everything must, of course, be referred to Mr. Trentin for his approval," she added.

"I have made that condition with Harrison," was the answer. "We both understand it perfectly." He was diplomatically looking down his nose, just then. "We shall arrange all the necessary papers this afternoon?"

His glance rather than his tone implied a question. Emily felt herself driven to the last extremity of effort to sustain her rôle.

"Why—" she began.

"We'll be ready at three, if you will," interrupted Harrison, pitying her.

"That's good," replied their creditor, getting up. "There isn't much. Good morning, Mrs. Trentin."

"Will you come to luncheon?" she asked.

"I was planning to be bidden," he responded laughingly. "But this puts all plans off. Tell Mr. Trentin I shall see him here at three, and excuse me until another day. When I am in the range of your wonderful cook I want to have an undivided attention to devote to her handiwork. Good morning, then."

For a minute or two after Mr. Whitehead's departure Emily stood looking out of the office windows utterly sickened with the need of ever pretending that which was apparently never to be true. Harrison was noticeably busy with the papers.

## ***A SURPRISINGLY EASY LOAN***

"What is he trying to do?" she demanded, coming over to a chair near Harrison's desk.

"We can't afford to ask," he answered.

"But of course he is playing a game—it was too easy! That's what he came here for to-day—not about his yacht."

"Certainly; and that's why I telephoned you as soon as I discovered it."

If Harrison had intended a compliment he gave her nothing but a sense of shame. A first, new rebellion against his self-confident use of her as his handy tool awoke in her mind and warned her that she was growing to be uncomfortably suspicious of a surprising number of people.

"Then he has a game?" she asked.

"Unquestionably."

"And we're part of it?"

"Not part of it. We're—it!"

"Harrison," she exclaimed, "don't be just smart! Tell me what you think. It's dangerous, isn't it? What does Mr. Whitehead want?"

He looked at her in his direct way, the way which by its overfearlessness impressed her more as disregard of others than as true simplicity.

"I don't know," he said. "There are several things worth while—or would be to me in his place."

He was regarding her too fixedly. It was an unspoken affront, tempered by just enough unsubtle flattery to excuse it to a woman's thinking. She left him abruptly, again feeling uneasy at being with him in any

## THE MASTER BUILDERS

place alone, but admitting no trace of true dislike. At the outer door he overtook her.

"Will you come again at three?" he asked.

"No," she replied. "You can say you have full authority. You can say that. Neither—neither of us will come over. You can do it, and bring the papers afterwards to sign. Isn't that better?"

"Very much better," he answered, and held the door for her. She had never before seen him do a service for a woman.

When Emily left the gateway of the Yard and entered the road outside it, she found Mr. Whitehead waiting for her, and frankly regarded his well-garbed figure, contrasting it with the greatly different men she was able to know in Oldport.

"As an afterthought, I waited to walk over to town with you," he said, in a sort of serious pleasantry.

"But I'm going to drive over, as I came," she answered, looking about for Furbish and the dogcart. "My man ought to be here now."

Mr. Whitehead's face assumed an aspect of amazed embarrassment.

"I *have* done it!" he exclaimed. "Your man is not to blame. He was here when I came out. The pony was restive, and I told the driver you intended walking home. I plainly remembered, or thought I remembered, hearing you say so, and before I knew how far I had committed myself your man was off. It is my fault, and——"

"It isn't too far to walk," said Emily, not alto-

## ***A SURPRISINGLY EASY LOAN***

gether uninterested by her unexpected part in an apparently not very dreadful plot.

"My regret would be keener," he continued, "were it not true that my stupidity has given me your company for a time."

His tone, from which he had not been able to wholly remove a trace of insinuating mockery, annoyed her; but resolutely determined to test the meaning of the occurrence, she only smiled vaguely and suggested that they start at once for the village.

"I wanted to have an opportunity to tell you," he said, "how much I sympathize with you just now."

"They need money more than sympathy," she responded, choosing her pronouns carefully, "and you have shown them a very practical kind of friendliness, I should say, this morning."

"I was not speaking of the business, though," he explained, "but of you. It is hard for a woman——"

"To the woman with a husband these things are nothing more than incidentals, you see," she said. "From what I have heard my husband say to Harrison, I judge they only need a little money with which to carry out some of their plans before the outbreak of a war. You surely were nice about helping them."

Baffled in that direction, he tried another tack, cleverly, if with a too exact courtesy, assuming her own terms of speech.

"They want to finish the big cruiser, I suppose?"

"Yes. They say not only the Yard's reputation, but the result of a war might hang just upon her alone.



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

Just this one ship—being the ship she will be—might turn the whole outcome into victory for us. Have you seen her?”

“I saw part of her designs long ago, when your father-in-law first had them; and to-day Harrison took me over her. She ought to be ready soon. You’ll be glad of that?”

“My husband is anxious about finishing her, I think,” said Emily. “He wants the navy to have her if there is a war.”

“That’s proper,” responded Mr. Whitehead. “But the main thing is to finish her and get the money out of her. Patriotism, or whatever you call it, is largely a matter of semiannual dividends. Get your money out of her—never mind what side she fights on in the war.”

“Yes,” she responded mechanically. She was not really listening to him, but was thinking of a plan to be away by herself. Details of the Yard were in her mind. She did not like his having forced his company on her in this way.

Mr. Whitehead’s pleasant argument proceeded unheard. A little ahead, Emily knew there was a path leading to the shore. When they reached it she turned and gave her hand in a conciliatory gesture which, nevertheless, expressed no thought but that of parting.

“Thank you for coming so far with me,” she said, too positively to be overruled by any pretext. “I leave you here. It is a short cut home. Mr. Trentin will see you, I suppose, at three.”

## **A SURPRISINGLY EASY LOAN**

“Oh, doubtless he will,” replied Mr. Whitehead, quite evidently adrift in understanding her, but fully respecting her wish to be alone. “Next time I shall hope to be at luncheon with you. Good morning.”

She walked quickly down the path through a descending gorge of fragrant grasses and sweet fern. A keen little breeze came pouring up through the scrubby pines, and as she rounded a stony bluff scragged over with uncut green, she looked across the sparkling harbor far out upon the sea.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE MAN IN THE LOG HOUSE

THE Trentins' neighbors were scattered along Cottage Road in an irregular line running from the village well on to the high bluff that marked the outer end of the harbor, and their house was about half way down. The Yard was beyond the village, on the other side of the harbor. When Emily took her short cut, on the days that she returned home from the Yard on foot, she passed down the main street of the village and then, instead of keeping on that way into Cottage Road, took a path to the shore and so went along the water fronts of the houses until she reached her own. It was a handsome row of summer dwellings, built by a group of noteworthy Americans who came to Oldport Harbor for their season of respite by the sea. It was a real respite, fed by the quiet of the town and just pleasantly diverted by looking on at the one activity of the place. With a single exception the houses were occupied by their owners. That was the usual boast of Oldport citizens in their visits to the busier watering places of their coast. The exception was the Log House, so named from the primitive manner of its external construction. It was in the hands of an agent in the city of New

## ***THE MAN IN THE LOG HOUSE***

York, and Oldport found an agreeable subject for gossip in discussing the probable tenants who would be sent to them each year, both before and after their arrival.

Few of the houses were open when, as Emily was taking her daily walk along the shore one quiet noon-time in mid-June, she looked up speculatively at the Log House in passing it and saw that it was occupied. Several of the windows were unclosed, and there were wicker chairs on the porch, and rugs. A row of alders lining her path interfered with her clear view, and she stopped and pressed back some of the close-leaved branches, making a place for her head.

Just at that moment a man passed before one of the upper windows. He moved quickly, but she recognized him. It was Whitehead. Her surprise at seeing him in Oldport—no word of his arrival had been mentioned at the Yard that morning—held her to the spot until, two or three minutes later, he came out upon the porch, and Trentin with him. They spoke together for a moment. Then they shook hands, and Trentin left Whitehead and crossed the lawn to gain the path which Emily herself was following. He made for a point farther down than where she stood, and beyond a curve which hid her from him when he entered the path and turned toward home.

Whitehead watched him out of sight behind the alders. Emily saw him look at his watch, like a man having an hour to keep with another. Then he re-entered the house, was gone only an instant, and came

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

back to the porch accompanied by a manservant. Whitehead pointed to a table. Emily supposed he was ordering his luncheon. The servant retired with an air that proved him to have come not from Oldport Harbor. Whitehead walked out into the center of the porch, turned, looked up at the window where Emily had seen him pass before he came out with Trentin, and evidently called some one. There was an answering movement of the muslin curtains, and the head of a blond woman was thrust out. Her face was held downward as she talked with Whitehead. Emily could not see it well from so great a distance, but she knew that flaming hair could belong to no one but Bessie Von Bianchi. Even while she wondered, before she had time to think of what it all might mean, the yellow head shook in a plain denial of Whitehead's invitation to come out and lunch on the open porch, and was snatched away from the window and out of sight. The servant brought a newspaper, and Whitehead lit a cigar and began to read in the deep comfort of an ample wicker chair.

For a few minutes there was no other movement that Emily could see. Then Whitehead dropped his paper and turned in his chair, looking upward toward the window. Some one had spoken to him from behind the curtains. Emily could not see the other person, but she had no difficulty in guessing who was there. They conversed at length. His head nodded and shook with plain gestures of approval or rejection of what was being said from above. At last he waved his hand as if closing the matter, and re-

## **THE MAN IN THE LOG HOUSE**

sumed his newspaper. The window was immediately closed and the curtains drawn.

Emily, absorbed in her study of the scene at the Log House, had not heard any step behind her. Just as the window closed she felt a sharp pain in the arm she was using to hold back the alders. She thought something had struck her there. Then she turned her head, and her heart sprang in an agony of fright. A man was holding her arm in a grip that seemed about to break the bones. He was a burly man, with a thick beard of lightish hair. He was evidently offended by Emily's presence, but there was a simple look in his eyes, for all they implied of cold determination, which made her know she was safe from anything very terrible. In the first glance she had of him, Emily saw that he was no American.

He made use of his grip on her arm to shake the alders from her hand and wheel her around into the path beside him. Then even his stolidity gave before her look of injured dignity, and he released her; but gesticulated largely with long arms that tried to make up the deficiencies of his speech.

"Vot you iss doingk here?" he demanded.

"I am preparing to have you arrested," replied Emily. She was quite angry, and feared nothing.

He dropped his arms and stared at her with the simple blue eyes. She knew he had not understood a word. He was not a prowler. His dress was well ordered—plain, but with a certain smartness of cut that, combined with his exceptionally alert manner, suggested the soldier. Her first impression remained

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

as she faced him in the path—that he had no design whatever except that she be induced to go on her way. Again his arms worked.

He waved one hand down the path and the other in the direction of the village, impartially.

“Be away—blease, vooman!” he said. He began to be a little distressed. Emily’s anger melted.

“Good morning,” she said, smiling at him and turning down the path to resume her interrupted journey.

His heels flew together and he put his right hand, with the palm open, to his forehead in a rigid salute. His face expressed immense relief.

Emily’s moment of mirth was short lived. The mystery of the Log House bewildered her. That Whitehead and Miss Von Bianchi should have come to Oldport secretly and together, as they must have come to have escaped the hundred-eyed loungers at the station and the store, was less puzzling than the sight of Trentin in their company. She was certain that Harrison knew nothing, and would have turned back to warn him but for the strong-armed guard in the path behind her. Besides, she wanted to hasten home and meet her husband. In spite of the very clear evidence that something was afoot concerning her and Harrison and the Yard—something they did not intend her and Harrison to know—she believed that Trentin would disclose everything to her the moment they were together.

He was on the porch when she came up to the house, his coat and cap on a neighboring chair. He was rub-

## ***THE MAN IN THE LOG HOUSE***

bing down a gun. Never before in all their years had he failed to meet her with the friendly, open smile which had charmed her at their first meeting and charmed her ever since. He looked up from the gun, nodded, and then bent down to his work again.

"Good morning, Emily," he said.

She knew he stood with them against her.

"Have you been shooting this morning?" she asked, coming up to enter the house.

"Not to-day," he answered.

For an instant she paused, hoping, believing, that he would go on and tell her what had taken him to the Log House. But he said no more, and she continued on her way. She went to her room and took off her dress, and lay on her bed for the half-hour before luncheon. All the level-headed capability for facing out hard things which had come to her in these long months of her training at the Yard fell before the tangled conflict of mysteries and fears that overcame her now. Fear of Whitehead's purposes, rage against the woman she had seen at his window, distrust even of Harrison himself, and shame and sorrow that Trentin had cared so little as to deceive her—these and the dull blank of an overwhelming surprise hemmed her in and paralyzed her thought. What could she do? Where were they all going? What did it mean? What was the use?

Presently she began emerging from it. Order came into her ideas. The fear went away. Her woman's sense of cunning suggested ways and means. She went back to the beginning, and came down step by



## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

step, day by day, from one thing in the case to another : the shipbuilder's death, the launching, the coming of Miss Von Bianchi, the struggle at the Yard, her husband's failure to accept the battle, their need of money, Whitehead's opportune intervention and surprising generosity—his amazing generosity——

Emily sat up in bed. She slipped off to the floor and stood straight up, tense in every muscle, and with her arms held straight out in that familiar effort to grasp the very substance of great facts. She was thinking of her last interview with Whitehead, that day he had waylaid her outside the Yard and walked with her until she escaped from him.

“Never mind what side she fights on in a war!”

So now she knew. They intended to get the cruiser away and use her against America. There was going to be a war. They knew it. Whitehead, with his perfect overshadowing control of the Yard and of the ship, Whitehead was the principal; and the bearded man who had caught her in the path and sent her home was the sign of what Whitehead intended to do. The others were his allies. Was Trentin his ally?

The necessity for decisive action gave her something on which to pinion the fortitude she needed. Swiftly she made her plan. She resolved to meet attack by driving straight through it at the center. Arraying herself with care, she went down to luncheon with a fresh and even lightsome countenance.

“Some one has taken the Log Cottage,” she remarked when she had a favorable opportunity. Her manner had entirely baffled Trentin and then warmed

## **THE MAN IN THE LOG HOUSE**

him into something like his natural response. Beneath the surface she saw the double mind that he was carrying, but the pity of it was less to her than the impetus of her own. "I saw the windows open as I came by this noon."

"It is Whitehead," replied Trentin. "He has a party of friends with him. They are going to keep bachelor's hall this summer."

"How interesting!" exclaimed Emily. "Interesting and unexpected. I had not heard he was coming. Have you seen him?"

"I met him—this morning," said Trentin, without looking at her. "I was walking—and we met. He told me about it."

She had a flash of gladness that he had not told her quite a falsehood. But he told her nothing else. With an effort she brought herself back to the pitch she had set, and played on with the part until the end of the meal. Trentin did his best to maintain a distance between them, which her superior feminine skill never found difficult to cross.

When they had finished luncheon she went into the library, to her own end of the long table, and wrote a note:

**MY DEAR MISS VON BIANCHI:**

I know you are in Oldport because I caught a glimpse of you this morning. If you aren't already settled at the hotel you must come down to us and bring your things. Your room will be ready, and if there is no one here you may go straight up. Minnie will unpack for you. You surely can give us a month.

Very sincerely,

**EMILY TRENTIN.**

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

She hesitated on the "Very sincerely"; and then let it stand. She sincerely wanted to get the girl within range.

Emily sealed the note, and called for Furbish, giving him orders to take it to the hotel and, if Miss Von Bianchi was not there, to return with it to the Log Cottage and ask for her address. At all events, he was to place it in her hand without delay and get an answer.

Trentin had returned to the porch, and she followed.

"I have news on my part for you," she announced. "I saw Miss Von Bianchi in the town to-day. I have just sent Furbish to ask her to come and stay with us."

"With us!" cried Trentin. He sprang to his feet before he could get control of his amazement. Emily pretended to see nothing.

"Yes," she went on calmly. "Her arrival was almost as unexpected as Mr. Whitehead's. They might almost have come together."

"Coincidence, no doubt," observed Trentin, sitting down again.

"Probably," she agreed. "I have often noticed, though, that coincidences involving interesting people are generally well rehearsed."

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded suspiciously.

"Only that I wonder if I shall be made to play the matchmaker between our visitors," she replied.

"Hello!" said a voice behind them. It was Harrison, his hands full of papers and torn envelopes. He had come through the house from the land side, with-

## ***THE MAN IN THE LOG HOUSE***

out the ceremony of announcing himself. He pushed his yellowed straw hat back from his forehead and began what he had to say.

"This came to-day by the hand of a special messenger—not by mail," he said, in a low voice. "It's about the Cruiser Twenty-Nine. The Navy Department advises us officially, and in secret, that war is certain within a few weeks. Everything to delay it is being done. We must finish the ship at the earliest moment possible and send her to sea without trials. Her guns are in the Yard, you remember. It's only a question of driving the last bolt, putting in coal, and getting under way. No more advance money is available, or will be, for six months. The secretary relies on us to do our part, and we must do it. The whole business may depend on this very ship. In moral effect alone she'll be as good as a fleet, the secretary says, if she'll make good—and, by God, she'll make good, and don't you forget it!"

There was that in the situation, and in the man's vigorous excitement over it, which made his oath forgettable. Neither of his hearers appeared to notice it.

"Besides," he went on, "here is the meat in this cocoanut. The other side have spies posted in every yard where navy work is being carried on. If they aren't on the job here yet they will be before we know it. They will do their level best to block work and delay deliveries. There's no definite knowledge about our place, but you needn't think for a minute that they are going to let us off, with the biggest fighting ship that's been attempted yet all ready to go to sea. No

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

sir! This is the place where they'll do their finest operating. We've got to watch sharp, and pull together—all of us—and go it alone as best we can. They can't even spare us an inspecting officer now. Get her to sea, that's the order, and that's the whole of it."

"Harrison," interrupted Trentin, in his high and insolent voice, "this dime-novel talk is very exciting at times, and sometimes amusing——"

"Oh—it is, is it!" retorted Harrison. He drew himself back from the table, as Trentin rose to his feet. Their attitude seemed to Emily to be singularly illustrative of their apparently irreconcilable antagonism.

"What about our stock," said Trentin, resuming, "which you pledged to secure Whitehead's loan?"

"Well," answered Harrison sharply, "what about it?"

"Never mind as to that now, Hector," broke in Emily. "Harrison, you would better return to the Yard. I'll drive over—or, Hector, suppose you sail me around in the catboat."

Without a word to Trentin, Harrison left the room.

"Come along, Boy," urged Emily, "come and sail me over. You will write all the better for it. Aren't you working on some verses?"

Her tolerant reference to his literary ambitions pleased him sufficiently to let him forget the incident with Harrison. They found the catboat moored off the end of their pier. Trentin went out in the cedar tender and brought her in to the steps, so that presently they were running up the harbor before a lively breeze.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A SAIL IN A BOAT

**W**E'LL have to make one long leg and then a short one to bring us into the Yard," said Trentin. "I think we can do it in that."

He was the most expert boat sailer in Oldport. Emily watched him sitting opposite her in the stern of the catboat, his round bare head, the thick brown color which was burned into his clear, high-class features, and his slender and muscular arms on which he had rolled his silken shirt sleeves to the elbows—a fine, strong, thoroughbred of a man. What had so nearly happened in the house a few minutes before forced Emily to comparisons between the two men, and called into her mind a thought which had persisted there of late—some elusive suggestion of a resemblance between them, a resemblance between antitheses, the face and the reverse of a certain human ingot yet unwrought in the crucibles of Time. Both men expressed force, in her understanding of each of them—Harrison the force in action, constantly exerting and exhausting itself; Trentin the mighty and immensely greater possibilities of energy undeveloped. The one interested her, the other fascinated. A fine, strong, thoroughbred of a man, she repeated in her thoughts, a man—but——

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"Poems don't seem to be in great demand, do they?" she remarked.

"It's not the fault of the poets that they are not," he responded. "Editors in these days don't know good verse when they see it."

"They see it so seldom—that may explain it in part," said Emily. "It may be sheer lack of speaking acquaintance, for one thing. Then I think most readers nowadays are more interested in life than in figurative analyses of life. You poets ought to wriggle out of your mummy cases!"

"Women don't understand poetry," observed Trentin, with a kind of naïvely impudent reference to nothing in particular in which his indolent mind delighted.

"They've managed to write and sell a good bit of it," retorted Emily, "beside inspiring a number of markets-full of miscellaneous verse."

"And they don't understand logic, either," continued Trentin in the same tone, though he acknowledged her hit with a frank smile. "Women are always concerned with what ought to be, without regard for what is. Otherwise you would be able to understand that a man can't make poetry out of shipyards and Down-East villages. Take my 'Daybreak on Como,' for instance. There's no such literary material in the sort of life we lead here, excepting such as we can import from outside. You don't expect me to appear with an essay on the artistic aspect of the clambake, do you?"

"That's exactly what you could sell—if you were

## **A SAIL IN A BOAT**

clever enough to write it," insisted Emily, determined to put the lash on him so smartly as to arouse some of his latent vigor of thought, "and that is precisely what I mean. You've been writing poems and terribly literary essays for the past ten years and not one of them has been bought by a reputable magazine."

"It isn't a question of sale, Emily," objected Trentin. "True art takes no account of coin."

"Common sense does, though," she declared, "and common sense is the foundation of all real literature. The world takes care that really successful men, as a class, are rewarded in terms of money. If you don't get checks in your mail, there's something askew in your temperament. You never had one!"

"Yes—once," corrected Trentin. "Nine years ago." He laughed with her, at the idea. "An editor sent me three dollars and a half. It encouraged me."

"'To literary labors; three-fifty!'" mocked Emily. "'To balance of living: all you could get from your father's allowance!'" She laughed again, so merrily that Trentin was forced to join.

"I suppose your practical soul would have been satisfied if I had taken to skippering a fishing smack," he said.

"Infinitely!" she cried. "Imagine it! The seas you would have sailed, the dangers you would have fought, the coarse, rough, natural, human men you would have met and dominated. You would have sworn at them horribly and beaten them back into their places! Sometimes they would have beaten you—pounded half



## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

the life out of you. In the winter nights you would be pitching off a leeshore with the spray freezing all over you. Sometimes big steamers would run you down. You would never have enough to eat. Your clothes would grow stiff and fishy. Your hands would be all cut and scraped and hard. You would have to fight for everything you got, and the total of your gains wouldn't be half enough ever to satisfy you. You'd be a rough, ready, resourceful, uncombed, untrimmed man—every bit of you a man without the least bit of—of—pink and white in you. And how you would write! How a man like that could write! I would be willing, myself——”

“No doubt you would, Emily,” interrupted Trentin. “I’ve noticed you have a liking for the brute side of life.”

“There isn’t any other side,” she replied. “All the motive power in humanity is derived from physical force. Art lives on the animal energies of the race. Yes, it does! When your artist wants to portray real life he doesn’t paint a typesetting machine or an Easter lily, he paints a dirty, tired, sweating man leaning on his hoe! When Art wants to discover the springs of human being it goes back to the animal instincts. ‘Daybreaks on Como’ are all very well as a certain advanced type of effect, but the cause of everything human is away down in that primary physical impulse which keeps freezing sailors at the helm in winter nights and makes women hunger to have children! I don’t fancy this ideal of overrefined life. I believe in the fight for existence, and in giving every feeling in

## **A SAIL, IN A BOAT**

you a chance for the expression God intended it should have."

Trentin made no reply to this outburst, and Emily knew from the heavy color which spread down out of his brown face into the white of his uncovered neck, that it had been an outburst and that it had touched him on something which caused him more shame than the customary irritation. For the time, therefore, she said no more, but sat watching him as he put the cat-boat about and went clawing across the wind toward the Yard.

Externally the man part of him was predominant just then. She looked along the firm set of his figure. The breeze was blowing his hair about his forehead. One arm was extended to the tiller, and with the other he braced himself as he leaned forward to see out under the close-hauled sail. He seemed only the lusty young sailor. She let herself luxuriate in the sight of him, in the thought of what she would like him to be, and of what he could be, rather than of what he was not. Suddenly she bent, and, catching up his hand as it lay on the tiller, pressed it to her face and kissed it, almost fiercely.

"Here!" he exclaimed. "Why did you do that?" The boat yawed half off her course.

Emily all at once felt that she could not meet his eyes, and turned away toward the land. Her cheeks were fiery.

"I—don't quite know," she answered. "I—couldn't help it. Something made me."

It sickened her to attempt an explanation; and now

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

that the climax of her mood had passed, she *was* ashamed of herself. But Trentin did not annoy her by further reference to it. In a few minutes they were at the Yard and, without touching the hand which he extended to assist her, she sprang out upon the boat slip and left him quite abruptly.

Trentin beat his way back home, enjoying the clear blow of the wind and sometimes singing old songs in a ringing voice. As Emily had seen before they parted at the Yard, her attack upon his follies had left no mark whatever. Arriving at his pier, he remoored the cat-boat and returned to the library. He had lighted a fresh cigarette and was working at his verses once more, when two warm hands were slipped over his eyes and his head was held very tightly from behind.

"Guess who?" said a voice that tried to be gruff. His hair was crushed against a yielding roundness and a fragrant perfume added to his distinct feeling of unnatural pleasure. Then he threw off both the hands and the spell they had brought with them, and, rubbing his blinded eyes, got to his feet.

Bessie Von Bianchi was laughing at him from the other side of the library table.

"You are quite stupid!" she cried. "I could have guessed at once."

"Where did you come from?" he asked. He did not like the freedom of her manner. He had noticed before that being alone with her produced a kind of irritability in him. When Emily was there he liked the girl. Now he wished she had not come. There was a quantity in her laugh that he always tried to

## A SAIL IN A BOAT

Evide. Now he believed he was actually afraid of it.

"I was asked," she said, "and I came."

"Yes," he responded, "you were asked; but I do not believe it was wise to come."

"Why not—*amico mio!*" she pleaded. She came slowly around the end of the table toward him. She kept her face always on him; but he saw her throw a cautious glance backward and about and into the hall as she came nearer. She came very close, and the perfume surrounded him and gave him that sense of allurements once again. Her loud laugh had given place to a murmuring tone.

"Why not?" she asked, again.

Trentin did not like to have her so near him. He felt that terrific sense of enjoyment, but he was afraid of it. He thought of no special reason, but he knew he was afraid. Despite her nearness he turned back, away from her, to his smoking table, making believe that he needed another cigarette. He took one and lit it to cover his confusion. It was confusion he felt, and he was ashamed of it. Miss Von Bianchi followed him to the table.

"That is a graceful compliment," she said. "We will smoke the pipe of peace together. May I——"

She selected a gold-tipped Egyptian cigarette and placed it in her lips.

"Will you light me?" she whispered, facing him. Trentin would have offered her his own cigarette, but she had her own mind as to that. She grasped his arms at the elbows and drew him to her. The point-

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

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## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

den desire to be at the Yard, and ran down to his boat.

Emily knew what she had to do. She had to hold Harrison. He must be kept at any sort of cost. Whitehead had the others. She had only Harrison. Already she recognized that the struggle would be between herself and Whitehead as it narrowed down to these last efforts. While she walked from the boat-landing where Trentin had deposited her over to the office building at the Yard, she considered whether she should tell Harrison her suspicions at once, or wait until they were more than suspicions and he had been tried and proven. She at this time believed she would hasten away to Washington with the story and have Whitehead so restrained that he could do no harm. Yet to accuse openly where proof would involve her husband—she could not answer that.

When she entered the offices she encountered the object of her thoughts. He was awaiting her, and led her in to one of the inner rooms on the side toward the village and the lower harbor. This was unusual, and he noticed her surprise.

“I wanted you to come in here and have a look at something,” he explained. “I’ve been studying it for half an hour—ever since I got back from your place. Did you know there was somebody in the Log House?”

“Is there?” she asked.

“Take these and look,” he said, handing her a pair of navy glasses. “Stand here in the middle of the room where they can’t see you, and look at that gable

## **A SAIL IN A BOAT**

window on this end. It just comes over the trees beyond the village.

She set the lenses and lifted the glasses to her eyes. In the window Harrison had indicated the seated figure of a man could be seen sharply silhouetted upon the bright spot of light made behind him by a doorway which some one in charge of his spying had failed to close, and which let the sunshine straight through from one side of the Log House to the other. The gable window came just above the village trees. Emily felt a quick sense of fear. The poise of the man's figure more than suggested to her the foreigner with the big beard.

"What does it mean, Harrison?" she asked.

"It means they have begun on us," he answered. "That fellow is a guard watching everything we do. Do you know who has taken the Log House?"

"Yes," said Emily.

"What!" snapped Harrison. He swung his set jaw around toward her, and gave her his savage glare. "Why didn't you say so?"

"I only knew it at noon, on my way home," said Emily. "It is Mr. Whitehead."

Harrison said nothing at first, but he did not remove his eyes from Emily's face. He moved half around the room to get more light on her expression. He came nearer, so that he could see into her eyes. He could not believe she knew what she was saying.

"Whitehead?" he whispered at last.

"Yes, I am sure of it because I saw him there," she responded.



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"Yes," he said, "you are right. I was going to tell you. He was here while I was at your house. He is down aboard the cruiser——"

Harrison stopped on the word. They looked at each other.

"The cruiser?" he repeated, making it a question. "Is that it?"

"I suppose it must be," said Emily. "I suppose it is what he has meant all the time—when he let us have the money."

Harrison suddenly grinned.

"There are several things to do," he said. He was wearing a soiled jacket, which he began to take off in a business-like way. "One of them is to go down there to the cruiser and throw this Whitehead overboard; and the other is to notify the Navy Department and ask for help. If you'll wait here while I run down and clean up that first operation, we'll have a talk about getting hold of Washington on the wire."

"No, no!" protested Emily. "It is the very thing you must not do!"

"I won't be more than fifteen minutes," urged Harrison. "You can wait, can't you?"

In spite of the situation, Emily laughed at his readiness to do the natural, violent thing instead of the expedient.

"That would ruin us at the very time we don't want to be ruined," she said. "If you throw Whitehead overboard now, how are you going to finish the cruiser without government money that you may not be able to get?"

## **A SAIL, IN A BOAT**

She had another quick thought—not quite a loyal thought—but one she would have.

“ And if you notify the Government and ask for help, and he hears of it—as he will—what is to prevent him from destroying the ship here in the Yard? If he cares enough about her to do this sort of thing, he would do that to prevent her from going to anyone else. Some one is paying him for it, and either way would bring its certain price to him, and ruin to us.”

“ And you think we’re going to sit here and see her cut out and us made fools of? ” Harrison’s hot temper rose up against her level head in wrath.

“ I think we might find a way to keep them in ignorance of our suspicions for the present,” she said, “ and then have her turned over to the Government, when she is ready, so quickly we should surprise them. Perhaps we could not do it. We do not know yet what we have to deal with. Mr. Whitehead probably has his proposition. When he is ready he will tell us. Until they make a move I think we ought to be quiet, and pretend we know nothing.”

“ By George! ” exclaimed Harrison, “ you’re right. We had better go slow until we find out where we stand. We only know one thing, now ”—he looked at her with a new significance struggling into his creased face—“ we know that we are going to stand together. Is that right? ”

It all came back upon Emily in that instant how much she needed him, how much she had to redeem alone, and how she must fail if he failed her. She had a rush of tears. She put her hands to her face to hide

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## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

it and then, when she was composed again, held them out to Harrison, who took them with awkward fervor into both his own.

"We will trust each other," she said. "We will stand together."

He shook her hands, held them briefly, and looked into her face, giving his answer in that way because his rough tongue knew no word for it.

Neither of them had seen Trentin open the office door just then, start as if struck on finding them with hands clasped together, and go away. The man in the window saw and made a note of Trentin's visit.

"Come down aboard," said Harrison. "I want to see Whitehead, and I shall need you there."

## CHAPTER IX

### MR. WHITEHEAD SHOWS HIS HAND

**A**S Emily followed Harrison across the gang plank to the deck of the cruiser, she heard her name called, and, looking up, saw Whitehead standing by the forward wall of the superstructure.

"Isn't she a ship for you!" he exclaimed admiringly, as the two joined him. "I arrived only this morning, and came here before doing anything else."

"A big ship appeals to everyone, I think," observed Emily, rather lamely.

"Naturally," he agreed. "And then I feel a sort of special interest in her—sort of proprietorship, you might say."

"Every American ought to feel as if he had a little stock in her," remarked Harrison quickly.

"And there are others who would like to," added Whitehead, "if we would name our price."

"That's easy," answered Harrison. "We'll offer her at the terms displayed in her front windows. Look at that twelve-inch rifle going into the forward turret! That's one half the first installment on her purchase price, if anybody should ask you!"

"Somebody has asked me," declared Whitehead.

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"No one has asked us," suggested Emily, disliking the inferences that were being thrust upon her.

"Naturally not," assented Whitehead. "The buyer in a deal like this consults the man who has the goods to sell. You'll hear of it last, but you'll hear. They want the ship—badly."

"And you want them to have her, I guess," said Harrison.

"Why not?" was the reply. "They pay well. I'm considering it."

"Perhaps you'll let us know when it was you assumed charge of the affairs of the Trentin Yard," said Harrison. Whitehead looked up, and searched his face with involuntary diligence.

"I've got too much invested here not to be interested," he answered. "You can see that?"

"Easily," responded Harrison. "So have we."

"And—well," went on Whitehead, in the coolest sort of an informal tone, "I have about decided to take an active part in your affairs. I'm in a position to insist; but you won't make me do that. I shan't bother you about money and debts and interest. We'll let that matter stand. As a creditor I'm not so terribly bad. But as to this ship, I control. That is all I say—I control. I'm going to let you go your own gait about that loan you got from me—all the time you want, and more money if you want it. Your part of the trade is only to take the good things which the gods provide, and look the other way about the time the ship is ready to go to sea. Isn't that all fair and clear?"

## **MR. WHITEHEAD SHOWS HIS HAND**

"All very fine," agreed Harrison. "You've forgotten only one thing."

"What's that?" asked Whitehead interestedly.

"You've forgotten us!"

Their creditor laughed.

"No, I haven't," he protested. "I've had you very much in mind. That's a way I have with my special friends!"

"Count us out on that score," replied Harrison.

"We decline your proposition."

"Oh, no, you don't," retorted Whitehead. "You can't!"

"Can't?"

"Why argue?" was the pleasant response. "Suppose you try and see. In the first place, I can ruin the Yard financially if I want to—or cripple it, anyway—any time I force you on my loan."

"Score one for you," answered Harrison. "After that you're done."

"No, I'm not done, either," went on Whitehead. "I'm just opening up. If you try to leave the Yard, or to communicate with anyone outside it without my express permission, you'll—well, you'll be prevented, in the first place; and in the second I'll come down on you like a thousand of brick with a demand for a settlement. You can't hire money these days—not for shipyards. I tell you, Harrison, I'm going to have my way! You've got to give it up! All you need do is rush her to a finish and then run away and play with some of the nice things I shall see come your way. That——"

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"And just to help on the joke," interrupted Harrison, "supposing somebody takes it into his head to notify Washington about this cute little summer outing of yours—how much are you going to pay the army and navy for letting you have your own way?"

"Good man!" cried Whitehead, with enthusiasm, "and good head for me. I expected that very situation. Well, I'll be candid with you, Harrison, and I'll let you in on the ground floor of our arrangements. You can scribble 'em down if you like, so as not to forget. The yard is practically surrounded by spies, and some of them are employed in the shops. They got jobs some months ago, in preparation for this very thing. You are to remain within the confines of the Yard until further orders from me, on the pretext that you are too busy to leave. Mrs. Trentin, of course, goes perfectly free. Her interests are the same as yours, besides which her house is," even Whitehead looked away as he said it, "her house is under special guardianship. Both of you are directed to preserve these conditions exactly. If you should not do so I should, as I have said, come down on you financially in such a way as to utterly ruin both you, Harrison, and what little is left of the Trentin family. Naturally, however, as you might be expected to stand not quite true to me even after all I have done for you and all I propose doing, if this matter comes off well, I have taken still further precautions against complete defeat. If the aid of the Government should be invoked by you or anyone else to arrest me or to interfere with my plans, we shall have the cruiser destroyed by

## **MR. WHITEHEAD SHOWS HIS HAND**

dynamite as she lies here at the dock. We are perfectly equipped to do so, and if it is necessary, we shall not hesitate. The very mines and cables are in place. In any case, whether or not we get the ship, you are bound to lose her. You might get me, but you'll ruin yourselves, and you know it."

He paused for a moment, smiling benignly on them both. They made him no answer, and he went on:

"I do not like this sort of thing, particularly in the presence of a lady, Mrs. Trentin. Even with men I do not like to make use of force unless it is absolutely necessary. In this case, I hope no force of any kind will be called for, and for that reason I am prepared to make you this proposal: Stand with me, not for the selling out of the cruiser, but simply to be somewhere else some dark night after she is ready, and I will agree, in any form of writing which will be binding while it need not betray our relations at all, to carry the business of this Yard for any reasonable period, and to let the loan, or such other loans as you may wish to make, run on indefinitely. In addition, Harrison, I take the greatest pleasure in saying that your personal services in the matter would be worth not less than ten thousand dollars in cash, to be deposited in the hands of Mrs. Trentin and turned over to you on the day we get the ship safely off to sea. What do you say to that?"

Emily knew that she had nothing to say. She knew that the ruin he could bring on them, if they forced him, would be more than the downfall of their fortunes—that it would involve her husband's name.



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

What she might come to later she did not know; but at this first moment of the trial she willingly put everything aside for the loving thought which ever sustained her. Until his day dawned she must stand for him.

Harrison started to speak, and met with some difficulty. He caught at his throat.

"I'm a prisoner, am I?" he demanded.

"You are," responded Whitehead. "If you try to leave you will be locked up. If you try to get aid, we will dynamite the ship before we'll lose her. We did not begin this game yesterday." He pointed across the harbor to the Log House. "Everything we do here is being watched from there. We are in plain view of them. We have a code of signals. One of our men is there now. He has a repeating rifle in one hand, and within touch of the other is an electric key that will explode the charges which we have placed under the ship. He won't wait to ask questions. If he gets the signal he will turn the key. If we needed it, I could have you shot through the head while we are standing here. He could do it. We picked him for that."

"You don't think we believe that?" asked Harrison. "That's the kind of thing you read about; but you can't do it nowadays."

"We had no trouble doing it in Oldport Harbor," laughed Whitehead. "You see, Harrison, we worked it all out in advance. The only reason we went into this was to win. We have estimated all the chances and all the dangers. You can't threaten me with any

## **MR. WHITEHEAD SHOWS HIS HAND**

danger we haven't considered and put our price on. If you get me into it I simply accept it, and get my price. Anyhow, you lose the ship and go head over heels into a scandal that will make a mighty loud noise. If you can't see that Mrs. Trentin can. It's so clear I don't believe we need argue any more. Now, you go back to your office and stay there until we decide what to do with you. Mrs. Trentin has her liberty for the present." Whitehead smiled at her significantly. "We know she will be wise."

Harrison's rage boiled up out of him. Whitehead saw it coming.

"Leave the ship!" he commanded sharply. "Go to your office and remain there!"

Dark color poured into Harrison's hard face. He sprang on his toes, holding himself as if suspended for an instant, and then launched at Whitehead's neck a blow with one gigantic fist that would have killed whatever living thing it struck.

Whitehead was prepared, however, and dodged. He never could have dodged again had not Emily's involuntary scream both disconcerted Harrison and alarmed two tow-headed men who had been lurking just around the corner of the superstructure on the main deck, and who ran to Whitehead. And while they all stood there waiting for some sign on either side, the faint, clear crack of a rifle shot was followed by the thick blow of a bullet on the steel just over Harrison's head.

"You must learn self-control, sir," remarked Whitehead. He seemed to have no sense of excitement or

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

of anger. He appeared even to be pleased. "You see our man has the range and can shoot straight. If you are unable to comprehend his warning, we might arrange to have him get nearer on the second try."

Harrison looked at Emily helplessly. He wanted, and was given, her assurance that he had done all he could, and must accept defeat. Still thinking of that loyalty dictated by her heart, eager above everything just then that even she herself might be induced to do nothing that would injure Trentin, she accepted it for them all.

"You must learn self-control, sir," repeated Whitehead, not quite so politely as before, and motioning to the two strangers to withdraw. "That sort of thing will not be tolerated hereafter. I have not admitted you to a knowledge of all my plans; but I may suggest once more that my people are prepared, and able, to shoot, and that physical resistance on your part will result in a disaster I should regret to see occur."

"Is this really what you mean, Mr. Whitehead?" asked Emily, giving Harrison some opportunity to recover himself.

"My dear lady," was the response, "I mean anything to win. You may be sure of that, and count on it as a part of your plans for acquiescence."

"Our what?" demanded Harrison, his anger flaring up again.

"I infer you fall in with my arrangements," said Whitehead, glancing warily at him.

"Not by a——"

## **MR. WHITEHEAD SHOWS HIS HAND**

"Yes, we do!" answered Emily, interrupting the terrible oath which was on Harrison's lips, and throwing herself in to save what she felt ought to be saved of a situation which was most decidedly against her. "We understand each other thoroughly, Mr. Whitehead. Your conditions are not agreeable, and we do not accept your suggestions of money rewards. But we understand that the whole case is in your hands, and that we have only to do our part and let you do the rest. We simply yield to superior force and fall into line with its requirements—that is all. Perhaps we have made the mistake of mixing more or less sentiment with a plain business proposition. We're to finish the cruiser just as quickly as possible. That's all we have to do. And you'll keep us going if we need more money. Isn't that it?"

"That *is* it, beautifully put!" exclaimed Whitehead. "It is what I expected of you, Mrs. Trentin, when the matter came to your decision, as I knew it must come in time. She has it in ten words, Harrison. You finish the ship. I pay the costs. That's all!"

"We simply do our part of the work, and then stop," added Emily.

"And then I come in—yes," assented Whitehead. "You see, Harrison?"

Harrison had been watching Emily to good purpose.

"Very good, sir," he answered. "I'm satisfied if you two are."

"You have to be," retorted Whitehead. It was the

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

one and only insult he had committed throughout the whole trying interview. It took Harrison by surprise, and he met it in the only way a man of his stamp could meet such a thing done before a woman he admired. He realized the futility of a personal attack when surrounded by armed men instructed to shoot and awaiting an opportunity to do so. He thrust his hands into his pockets to hold them in their places, but he stepped close up to the other man, with a face quite purple with his rage.

"Damn you!" he said, in a thick and muttering whisper which thrilled Emily from head to foot with the horror of the brutal anger it expressed, "you've got me, and I know it as well as you do. I'll finish this job out for you, and then I'll finish you—you——"

Mr. Whitehead could not stop him, but he motioned Emily away and sent her hurrying down the gang plank out of reach of the terrific outpour of enraged profanity with which Harrison lashed the man he dared not touch by hand. How the interview ended Emily did not know, excepting that when she was well up the Yard she turned and looked back and saw that Harrison was following her ashore, and that Whitehead still stood on the cruiser's deck, smiling after him. She could not endure the thought of meeting him after what she had just heard, and hurrying out of the Yard, walked rapidly home. All the way she was conscious of the presence, not far behind her, of a discreet young man who seemed always to be having trouble with his bicycle.

## **MR. WHITEHEAD SHOWS HIS HAND**

Not more than an hour after she reached the house, a boy came with a note scrawled on a very stained visiting card:

I have escaped, and am off for a week. Sit tight; don't let them frighten you, and watch everything as sharp as they'll let you. Give W. all the rope he wants. Most of his talk is bluff. Do nothing until my return.

H.

She was so agitated by the events of the day, and felt so degraded by implication in an incident which Harrison's frightful temper had rendered inexpressibly painful to her, that she did not then object, in her mental attitude toward his flight, to what a day or two later began to appear to her very much like desertion. She was too tired and bewildered to take anything seriously, and too fearful that some of the threats which she had listened to on board the ship that day might be carried out, to the destruction of everything material which just now she was striving so ardently to preserve.

But Harrison's warning note prepared her for the arrival of Whitehead himself that evening. When she came down she found him declaiming angrily to her husband. His manner became calmer when he met her, but he concentrated much bitterness in his tone when he said, without preliminaries:

"Mrs. Trentin, where is Harrison?"

"I don't know anything about Harrison, Mr. Whitehead," she said.

"You mean to tell me you don't know he has dis-

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

appeared against my explicit orders? You mean to say that you know nothing of that?"

"Nothing—definite," she replied.

"Oh, nothing definite!" He glanced meaningly at her husband, and came to a full stop. Emily found both men looking at her, and realized that her denial had seemed to both of them a tacit confession.

"I decline to be drawn into the matter, Mr. Whitehead," she said composedly. "I do not know and do not care where Harrison has gone—if he has gone. You have my promise that the cruiser is to be rushed exactly as you wish. Isn't that enough?"

"But this man——"

"Isn't that enough?" she insisted.

"Plenty for me, madam," he responded, picking up his hat. "I hope your husband will be as easily satisfied. I may say, too, that as I have placed another man in charge of the Yard to-night, you may tell Harrison that he need not mind about coming back. And if it's treachery he's playing, he'll come back to a blown-up hulk of scrap iron, exactly as I told you. Mind that. Good evening."

When he had gone, Emily turned to her husband. He avoided her, and began picking nervously at his blotter. She hesitated a moment, and suddenly he looked up, quite fiercely.

"I'm wondering what sort of an explanation you're going to make to me," he said.

"Explanation?"

"Yes—explanation—about you and this man Harrison and the plots you two are undertaking to ruin

## ***MR. WHITEHEAD SHOWS HIS HAND***

me. I'm wondering what you're going to say to me about that? "

" Nothing," she said.

" What! " he cried. " Nothing? "

She went over to him swiftly, and put her face close down to his, as he sat in his chair.

" Not a word, Boy," she said gently. " Good night," and left him.



## CHAPTER X

### A MESSAGE AND A MESSENGER

**M**R. PINNOT was aroused from his afternoon nap in the shades of the Back Shop by the persistent rattle of the sounder in the telegraph office.

"Mis' Dix!" he called, putting his head out into the empty store. No one answered him. In the minute during which he assured himself that there was bound to be no response, a large smile grew upon his features until it beamed with a satisfied brilliancy toward the corner in which Mrs. Dix usually sat, and where the sounder was still banging out its impatient signals.

Mr. Pinnot arose, and hurrying into the store, locked up the post-office and the money drawer. He glanced at the clock and noted that there yet remained twenty minutes before the arrival of the stage mail, at the same moment approaching the washstand where he slicked his hair down with three deft and wetted fingers and gave a hitch to his coat. Then, struck by an important thought, he paused and stood stock-still for a moment looking down at his person critically. He seemed dustier than usual. His head turned irresolutely toward the post office. Again he glanced into the mirror. That decided him.

## A MESSAGE AND A MESSENGER

"No!" he exclaimed aloud. "It ain't, nuther. It's an official visit, all straight an' reg'lar, by tidy, an' they ain't no 'ifs' nor 'ands'——"

He was already halfway to the post-office door. Unlocking it, he went in. When he came out he had put aside his store coat and was buttoning up the Prince Albert.

"There!" he ejaculated, as he relocked the door and slipped the key behind a neighboring box of nails. "If I ain't Solomon in *all* his glory, I'm rich enough for Oldport!"

He hastened behind the counter and, tumbling down a long pasteboard box, plucked therefrom a black silk bow, which he adjusted about his neck at the mirror with uncommon attention to details. This done, he went to the door quite eagerly. The smile still illumined his face. He gave one more look at the clock, another at the peremptory sounder in the telegraph office, and then, grabbing up a small packet of sweet crackers left by an inquiring customer during the morning, walked briskly into the sunny street and headed diagonally across it toward the neat white house with green blinds where Mrs. Dix lived in solitary comfort over the millinery store.

This course brought Mr. Pinnot into range of the blacksmith shop and Hunting's Hotel, from both of which he was sighted the instant he appeared in the open.

"Cap'n Pinnot!" hailed a hearty voice from his starboard side. He knew, from the affected use of his sailor title, that he was being spoken by a group of

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

guests-without-baggage which daily adorned the porch of the hotel; and, pretending to hear nothing, he forged ahead.

"Cap'n Pinnot, sir!" came the hail again. "O Mr. Postmaster!"

Appeal to his official capacity brought Mr. Pinnot to terms he could not possibly have allowed under other circumstances. He slowed down and faced the hotel.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," he explained with dignity. "But I'm on gover'ment business an' hain't got a minute to lose."

"Very good, sir," answered another voice. "You'll find her in, all right!"

"Gentlemen," responded Mr. Pinnot coldly, "as United States——"

"Don't let us detain you, cap'n!" cried Pip McGuire, whom the postmaster now recognized in the front rank of his tormentors.

He swung on his course again, and was proceeding at full head, when he was alarmed to observe a party of his acquaintances putting out from the blacksmith shop on his port beam at a rate which assured that they would cross his bows before he could make the milliner's steps. He easily identified the blacksmith's oldest boy, Cap'n Henry Haines the cheese maker, Cap'n Ira Mavis the lawyer, Judge Nowell the justice of the peace (and quorum), and Justin Colbath, the horseman; while the blacksmith himself stood inquisitively in the door of his shop and watched the impending collision.

"Gentlemen," remarked Mr. Pinnot determinedly,

## A MESSAGE AND A MESSENGER

as he saw they would foul him unless he came to a dead stop such as might be taken as a sign of timidity he proposed not to admit, "as a representative of the United States Gover'ment, I aint a-goin' to be subjeck to no interruptions when I'm on official business!"

The entire party halted in well-arranged surprise.

"Why, *Cap'n* Pinnot!" cried Henry Haines. "Good mornin', cap'n! We hadn't noticed ye till we heered ye speak. We was jest a-goin over to Hunt-ingses to see Pip Mequire's new duck gun."

"That's all—jest a-goin over to the hotel," chimed in Ira Mavis. They all drew around their victim.

"Oh!" remarked Mr. Pinnot nonchalantly.

"The question you have raised, however, *Cap'n* Pinnot," said Judge Nowell, dictatorially eyeing the postmaster, "is, *Be* you *on* official business?"

"Jedge," declared Mr. Pinnot with hopeful solemnity, "I be!"

"Then," announced the judge, "you need a posse to uphold the dignity of the law."

"Sure he does," agreed Justin Colbath.

"I don't need no such a thing, nuther!" retorted Mr. Pinnot warmly. "If I do I'll let you know in plenty of season."

"Yes, you do, cap'n," insisted the judge. "Lawyer Mavis, what do the statutes say in these premises, sir?"

"I remember the language of the law well, judge," replied *Cap'n* Mavis modestly. "It says: 'No Federal officer shall hold two offices at the same time, and all fourth-class postmasters are warned against running

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

errands for the servants of the Telegraph Company.' That's the law, sir."

"And good law!" replied the judge heartily.

"It ain't no such a thing, an' I decline to be am-buscaded," growled Mr. Pinnot. "If this 'ere posse don't disperse in one minute, or less, there'll be some fine slashin' nex' town-meetin' day, as sure as you're born, by thunderin' tidy there will!"

This semiserious threat had considerable effect. But when the others moved on, the judge remained, staring at Mr. Pinnot with absorbed interest.

"What be you a-lookin' at, Sam Nowell?" demanded the postmaster, uneasily fumbling up and down in search of possible separations. Apparently the judge did not hear the question.

"Black silk fifty-cent necktie, right out in the bakin' sunlight on a week day in July!" he muttered, as if solely to his own ears. "Black silk fifty center! Of all—" Shaking his head ominously he walked away to join the others.

Mr. Pinnot resumed his course, not much concerned at the large degree of public interest manifested in his visitations to Mrs. Dix, but a good deal embarrassed by Judge Nowell's allusion to the black silk tie. Twice he began to remove it, but, raising his eyes in the midst of the second attempt, he discovered Mrs. Dix herself, with her face close to the parlor window, regarding him watchfully. She withdrew when she saw him look up, and not daring to undertake the least change in his costume after a review by her sharp and experienced glance, he lost no more time. After passing a line of

## **A MESSAGE AND A MESSENGER**

smiling faces in the millinery windows he found his way clear, and mounted the outside stairs leading to Mrs. Dix's polished hard pine front door with a feeling of no little relief. At least, he felt reasonably sure of what was before him now.

For some minutes his knock was not answered. Then the door was thrown suddenly open by Mrs. Dix. She wore a long white kitchen apron, perfectly spotless and crackling with fresh starch. Her sleeves were rolled up to the elbows, showing two very pink little round arms with pink little dimpled wrists. Her hands were white with extraordinarily dry and powdery flour, and on her head, where her soft brown hair was tousled into a perfectly arranged disorder, she had a tiny white cap. Mr. Pinnot, who had never before seen her looking so young and charming, gazed speechlessly into her rosy face and mechanically readjusted the black silk tie.

"Why, Mr. Pinnot!" exclaimed Mrs. Dix. "How you did surprise me—right in the middle of my Saturday bakin'."

Mr. Pinnot started as he recalled having seen Mrs. Dix's face at the parlor window five minutes before. Then he smiled amiably.

"Only this ain't Saturday, Mis' Dix," he suggested. "It's Wednesday."

"Of course it is, Mr. Pinnot!" retorted the lady impatiently. "I'm one o' them that believes in bein' in season."

"Suttenly," assented Mr. Pinnot. "That's what  
——"

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"Mercy on us!" cried Mrs. Dix explosively, "anybody dead in the village?"

"Not to my knowledge," said Mr. Pinnot doubtfully.

"What you a-wearin' that black silk Sunday tie on a week day for, then?" she demanded.

Mr. Pinnot's patience collapsed under superior stress.

"Madam," he answered with dignity, "I come over here on the official business of the United States Gover'ment, to inform you—now don't you interrupt me in the discharge of no duty, nuther, Mis' Dix," for her face was lighting up significantly, "to inform you that New York's a-callin' of you an' you're wanted at the telegraph office immediate."

"I am, am I?" responded Mrs. Dix. "Well, Mr. Pinnot, if anybody should ask you, you tell 'em I said I didn't believe it."

"Now, Mis' Dix," began the postmaster diplomatically, "I——"

"Don't believe a word of it!" she insisted. "What you got in that cracker box? Give it to me this minute!"

Mr. Pinnot surrendered the box.

"They're for you," he said in a low voice, as she lifted the cover and peeped in.

"O Mister Pinnot!" exclaimed Mrs. Dix in a markedly softened tone. She smiled upon him with a sudden cordiality which he appreciated without being sufficiently experienced in women's ways to understand. "If you can excuse my kitchen things," she went on, "won't you come in an' set awhile?"

## A MESSAGE AND A MESSENGER

"But New York's a-callin', Mis' Dix—honestly is," urged the postmaster, with a reluctant adherence to duty which was doubtless assisted by the hot and direct fire of several batteries of sharp eyes whose owners had gotten the exact range of the widow's doorstep from their neighboring windows. "That's really what I come over for," he added.

"Honest, Mr. Pinnot?" insisted the archly suspicious Mrs. Dix. "Warn't it only one o' them cute ruses o' yours to—to see me alone?"

The postmaster again clutched at the black silk tie for comfort, and flushed next to audibly. His admiring glance, however, was not diverted from Mrs. Dix's trim little presence, and he made bold to say:

"No gentleman in Oldport Harbor wouldn't need no *excuse* for to see you, Mis' Dix—that's sartain sure. Hadn't we better go back to the store together an' see what New York wants—if you could leave your Saturday bakin', that is?"

Mrs. Dix left her baking with amazing ease of mind, and, between two ranks of envious glances down which the postmaster glared with a supremely confident air of utter victory, they hurried over to the store. Mrs. Dix ran around behind the telegraph counter and threw open her key. Mr. Pinnot, rather regretfully slipping out of the Prince Albert, busied himself with sorting the small batch of stage mail thrown on the store steps during his absence. When he had finished and re-entered the store, he found Mrs. Dix writing rapidly on an envelope, which presently she handed over her counter to him.



## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"That's got to go over to the Trentin house at once," she said, with a remarkably winning smile. "Could we find some one to take it for us?"

Mr. Pinnot's heart leaped at her unexpected use of the significant plural pronouns.

"It's important, I s'pose," he suggested.

"Terrible important!" she answered earnestly.

"In such a case," said Mr. Pinnot, "I think I, bein' a Gover'ment official, ought to take it over in person officially—officially." He half turned back toward the Prince Albert once more.

"Oh, you old——"

Mrs. Dix's excited gratitude, with its promise of further revelations of her sentiments, was cut short by the entrance into the store of Mrs. Trentin herself, followed closely by her husband. Neither appeared over-comfortable.

"A telegram for you, Mr. Trentin," announced the postmaster, a trifle zealously.

"No!" cried Mrs. Dix. "It's for Mrs. Trentin!"

"That's quite the same, of course," said Trentin quickly. "Let me have it, Pinnot."

He extended his hand eagerly. Mr. Pinnot, however, sensible that he had lost some part of Mrs. Dix's esteem by his blunder, resolved on a bold play to save his reputation. Passing by the outstretched hand, he gave the telegram to Emily, and turned with a pleasant smile to Trentin, angry and red behind him.

"As a United States Gover'ment official," he explained, "I hev' to do my duty, Mr. Trentin."

## **A MESSAGE AND A MESSENGER**

Emily tore open the message and read it rapidly :

Try to keep everything quiet until Friday, and have meeting of directors on some pretext, with Whitehead present, that morning nine o'clock. Will return in time. Maintain absolute secrecy till you see me.

HARRISON.

She thrust the telegram into her dress, and left the store. Trentin followed her as far as the dogcart in which they had driven over.

"Let me see that message," he demanded.

"Not just now, Boy," she said as gently as ever. "In a day or two."

"See here," he replied, "I'll not drive another step with you unless you hand that message over! It's from that man Harrison, and I propose to have it! Give it to me instantly, I tell you!"

Something bitingly sarcastic came to her tongue's end—something about him and about another than herself came so far and stopped there.

"Very well, then, Boy," she answered, smiling as she gathered up the reins, "walk back if you like. I'm going on to the Yard, anyway. Don't worry about Harrison. Good-by!"

She flicked the pony deftly, and left him standing in a cloud of dust. Looking back toward the store he saw Mrs. Dix and the postmaster eyeing him anxiously, and, irritated by their scrutiny and by the inferences which it implied, started away toward the shore. Then he wheeled abruptly and came back.

"Pinnot," he said, standing in the doorway of the

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

store in his characteristically uncompromising fashion, "if Miss Von Bianchi should come in, you may tell her I was here and went on to the golf links to wait for her."

"Very good, sir," answered the postmaster.

His gaze followed Trentin as the latter strode away. Then his feelings broke.

"Wal, I'll be ——"

"So would I!" interrupted Mrs. Dix, with fervor; "but bein' a poor lone widder woman I jest can't!"

What Harrison had done Emily could not guess, excepting that she felt sure he had vastly increased the danger that surrounded them, and particularly that which menaced herself and her frantic hope that she might carry them through without a wreck of everything. Her bringing Miss Von Bianchi into the very household most concerned in her endeavors had so far proved to be a move of extraordinary value. It had assured Emily of what they were fighting. It enabled her to see that whatever they had for Trentin to do they had as yet kept him in ignorance of it, simply holding him to them and away from her by means she fortunately did not know. Had she known the full extent to which they had gone in attempting to at once trap Trentin into something dishonorable which could be used to beat him to submission at the required time, and to throw suspicion on her motive in becoming everything to Harrison's labors at the Yard—had she known that in its full extent she could never have

## ***A MESSAGE AND A MESSENGER***

kept on. And, as it happened, the end came before full disclosure was made necessary.

She began to believe that Harrison would defy Whitehead's threat and bring them help from the navy. That that would ruin them she understood.

## CHAPTER XI

### A CIPHER MESSAGE

EMILY was called to the telephone a few evenings later, while shut into her own room with a mass of old papers relating to the Yard. She had escaped there with relief from the chatter of Miss Von Bianchi, which babbled on and on against the in-harmonious background of constraint which day by day took new proportions in the household. It was here and not at the yard that Emily carried her most onerous burden.

She was quite prepared to find Harrison on the wire. The fear of his first words nearly stifled her.

"I'm at the Yard," he explained. "Just managed to get in. Come over at once."

"It is eleven o'clock," she protested. "I can't. What have you done?"

"Yes, you can," insisted Harrison. "Don't bother me with trifles now. I've sent Mrs. Dix and Pinnot to get you. You're to meet them just outside your gate. Make some excuse and get away."

"But I——"

"I'll be waiting for you," he added peremptorily, and then rang off before she could say another word. Her fears were not lessened.

## **A CIPHER MESSAGE**

Knowing perfectly well that she ought to go, but suffering with a positive fear of Harrison which his last meeting with Mr. Whitehead had inspired, she hurriedly prepared herself and went out into the main part of the house in search of Trentin. She meant to tell him of her going out. He was not in the library, and as she returned to the hall to continue her hunt she remembered, with a force made more vivid by the errand she was now upon, not only her husband's difficult attitude toward the whole case, but his bitterly thoughtless fling at Harrison when she left him so uncereemoniously in front of the store and drove off alone with her undisclosed telegram. Her original determination to intrust nothing to Trentin, and to endanger no part of the situation by giving his petulant and undisciplined temper an opportunity to upset it, was absolutely fixed. She felt that she might as well carry a little more of his wrath, and, intent on meeting her waiting chaperons without delay, turned quickly through toward the rear porch, intending to leave by that door.

As she passed the double entrance to the dining room, opposite the library, she looked through its dark quietude and its broad window out upon the side porch. Trentin and Miss Von Bianchi were seated on the rail, with a slender pillar, on which they each leaned, between them. They were placed toward her, but were too intent on each other's faces to see her standing in the dusky hall. She heard a low, continuous tone of conversation without distinguishing a single word. For a moment she halted and watched them, at first

## THE MASTER BUILDERS

with the idea of letting them know frankly of her departure, and then realizing the unwisdom of placing such information in the hands of Whitehead's principal spy. But she dwelt with a sudden and complete accession of morbid anger upon the confidential attitude of the two on the porch—an anger which she was too high-minded and honest to temper, or to seek to justify with any satirical reflections on the fact, that her husband, as well as she, had something to conceal. Then regaining the strong self-control which she had been learning all the years of her life with Trentin, she put the little scene and its suggestions away from her, and went on, noiselessly, out of the house.

"Whoa!" roared the incautious voice of Mr. Pinnot, as she left the gateway and plunged into the thick of the night.

"Sh-h-h-h!" echoed the experienced Mrs. Dix.

Emily ran plump into the soft old nose of Mr. Pinnot's sorrel horse.

"Hard aport, ma'am, if you please," sang out the postmaster in an exaggerated excitement, "an' then come alongside. Here ye be at the gangway. *Good evenin', Mis' Trentin. Git right in!*"

"In the middle?" asked Emily, doubtfully estimating the width of the official carryall. "I'm the smallest, I think."

"No, indeed, ma'am," responded the postmaster in alarm. "Set right in here on the starbo'd quarter, an' we'll stow Mis' Dix amidships."

"I'm willin'!" remarked Mrs. Dix, evidently by way of filing a *pro forma* claim to her rights before she

## **A CIPHER MESSAGE**

night be called on to waive them. And off they went, he postmaster snugly battened down behind the little widow, and ecstatically intrusting the matter of navigation to the common sense of his steady nag.

"We thought it best for you to be—looked after, sort of, Mis' Trentin," said Mrs. Dix apologetically, after some minutes of silence.

"An' specially after what took place at the store this week, ma'am," added Mr. Pinnot. A violent grunt uttered by the postmaster immediately afterwards led Emily to believe that Mrs. Dix had delivered him a muscular poke in his stomach. At any rate, there were no further attempts at conversation until they drove up to the Yard fence and were let in with silent secrecy by one of the strange, new men whom Mr. Whitehead had placed on guard.

Harrison met them just inside the gate and, when the sorrel horse had been put under the sheds, led them to the offices, where one dim candle burned behind closely drawn shades.

"I bribed that watchman," he said, as they entered. "We can probably be undisturbed for a couple of hours. He can't be bought back before that time. Pinnot, you and Mrs. Dix clear out, now."

"No, no!" cried Emily. "They must wait for me and take me home." In an instant she found herself rembling with another return of that fear of Harrison which was the more terrifying because she knew it was wholly physical and instinctive.

"I'll see to that," declared Harrison. "Pinnot, you go as I say!"



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

Emily was too frightened to consider what effect her opposition to his plan, whatever it was, might have on the situation as a whole. For the moment, she did not care. The intuitive conviction that the free hand and the high excitement which Harrison had had in the past eventful months, had turned loose in him some ungovernable fury of desire to master everything within his reach, held her to her resolve not to be with him alone. And if she needed any other reason she could naturally have found it in what was in progress at that very time between her husband and the other woman who was making game of him. She would not stay alone, yet she knew not what to say to avoid a quarrel. But Mrs. Dix's sharp eyes had taken in everything—observations which she had quietly added to what she had seen of Harrison himself when she and Mr. Pinnot were sent to bring Emily to the Yard.

"We'll stay right here till you're done," she announced. "We can set in the other room there, jest as well as not. I don't want to go home alone, neither."

"I'm sartain I don't!" remarked Mr. Pinnot archly. Mrs. Dix pushed him through the doorway before Harrison could continue his objections.

"Thank you for coming over," said Harrison formally, hardly looking at Emily. "I want to plan out to-morrow's meeting in detail, item by item, so the programme won't go wrong. You have called the meeting all right?"

"Yes."

"It's time we acted. Everything and everybody here

## ***A CIPHER MESSAGE***

are going under Whitehead's thumb fast. He has half the crew on extra pay, I judge. Now, then, we'll begin. How much time can I have?"

"As long as the business needs," she answered.

Harrison went headlong into a heap of papers. He had seen and warned the Navy Department, and got its promise to make no move until he asked it. Then he had arranged their first step in the struggle to be free of Whitehead.

Two hours later Emily stole up the steps to her own porch. Mr. Pinnot waited patiently on the gravel behind her. Just as she reached the upper step there was a rattle at the lock of the door, and almost immediately afterwards some one within switched on the electric light set in the roof of the porch. The door opened cautiously.

"Who's out there?" demanded Trentin, showing his head. Emily was upon him before there was time to answer. She pushed the door in and disclosed Bessie Von Bianchi in the hall behind it, evidently about to be taken for a stroll in Trentin's company. They had caught her in a trap, after all.

"Where have you been, Emily?" asked Trentin pointedly.

"On an errand," she answered. "Were you two going out, also?"

Trentin balked.

"Yes," responded Miss Von Bianchi.

Emily could not command herself sufficiently to let the incident pass. She was quite human enough to

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

enjoy—even recognizing it as an unprofitable and expensive enjoyment—the discomfiture of the pair before her; and the peculiar injustice of her position which left her so little opportunity of defending herself against questions which any man should have a right to put at such a time, rendered her perfectly willing to make the most of things. Harrison's assurances that they were so far safe had given her confidence, even in the face of their discovery that she had been out of the house on some unknown mission that night.

"It isn't quite agreeable for a walk," she remarked. "You couldn't see a foot before you."

"You drove, I suppose," ventured Miss Von Bianchi.

"It was dark enough, anyway," said Emily.

"It must have been perfectly inky over at the Yard," continued the girl with innocent interest.

"Probably it was," agreed Emily. She was fully alive to the danger her appearance had created, and to her guest's part in the game Mr. Whitehead was playing. The ever so slightly exaggerated quiet of the girl's voice and manner, and the keenly businesslike look which even her evidently extended experience was unable to wholly conceal, were a sufficient indictment when added to what Emily already knew. Only extreme measures could prevent betrayal of Harrison's return and the downfall of his plan for the next day.

"But you mustn't go out at all," Emily went on quickly.

"That sounds too much like an order, I should say,"

## **A CIPHER MESSAGE**

retorted Trentin impatiently. "Why should we not go out if we like—and it happens that we do like!"

"I was speaking of Bessie, of course," replied Emily, with her steadiest smile. "You can do as you please. I think you will please to stay in, though. It appears that housebreakers are in town again, and are prowling down Cottage Road. I didn't dare come alone, you see."

"So Harrison is back, I suppose," interrupted Trentin sarcastically, "and was kind enough to trot down with you. That's where you've been, is it?"

"No," said Emily, laughing quite merrily into Miss Von Bianchi's brilliantly alert eyes, "Mr. Pinnot was my escort. Come up, Captain," she called, turning about.

Mr. Pinnot stumbled awkwardly up the steps.

"Good evenin'," he remarked affably.

"And Captain Pinnot is going to assist us still further," said Emily, hurrying on as her plan developed in her mind. "The stableman will be needed to see that all is safe at the barn. Mr. Pinnot was kind enough to say that he would remain here with us all night, camping down right here in the corridor, to see that nobody gets in to do us harm and that nobody gets out to have harm done to them. Isn't that generous of him?"

"Yes, ma'am," assented Mr. Pinnot, considerably bewildered. "But I don't see no object in——"

"Yes, you do, Mr. Pinnot!" snapped Mrs. Dix from the darkness below the steps. "You see it all as plain's the nose on your face."

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"Sartain!" agreed Mr. Pinnot firmly. "Who said I didn't? I was only a-goin' to mention that you, Mis' Dix, was a long ways from port yourself."

"Never you mind about me," declared the lady briskly, and emerging from below as she, too, mounted the porch to join the group. "I'll stay, too. It ain't safe to go back alone. You heerd them dretful shrieks as we crossed the crik, didn't you?"

"Horrible!" exclaimed Mr. Pinnot, shuddering powerfully.

"So then," directed Emily, her plan now well laid out, "we will go in. Mr. Pinnot, you can take your horse out and ring up Furbish at the barn. After that, come back here."

"It's much wiser, I'm sure," said Miss Von Bianchi, as they went into the library. "I admire your good judgment, Emily. You're a clever manager."

"I call it perfectly ridiculous nonsense," asserted Trentin. "I don't believe there's a burglar within a thousand miles."

"Why don't you go out and see?" suggested Miss Von Bianchi. She was seated at one end of the long writing table, jabbing a pencil into a pad of paper without apparent object. Emily's intent ear caught the girl's remark and she resolved to give her an opportunity to play her game out in the interval during which they awaited the return of Mr. Pinnot.

"Sit here, Mrs. Dix," she said, indicating a big red chair. "I have a memorandum to make."

As she sat down at her desk she shifted the position of a square-framed calendar which sat habitually be-



“‘Hardly cipher—just plain fooling,’ said the girl.”

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## **A CIPHER MESSAGE**

fore her, so that its plate-glass front, backed by dark green paper, reflected a view of the whole room. Thus she was able to observe that the instant she was seated Miss Von Bianchi dashed down upon the paper pad some brief message, after which she threw away the pencil and beckoned to Trentin, who stood near.

Emily rose and turned just as the top sheet of the pad was being torn off with a hurried rasp of broken glue. The girl saw her too late to conceal the motion by which she was about to hand the note over to Trentin, but met the sudden change of scene with ease.

"Here!" she cried, laughing lightly, "go out and hunt the burglar and give him this message from me. Wait—I'll sign it—there!" she threw down the pencil again and passed the paper, not to Trentin, but to Emily, who was now close to them.

"While he is trying to puzzle that out, you can call Mr. Pinnot and tie the villain up with the Trentin clothesline."

"Look out for Number Two, 1234," read Emily, aloud. "What an exciting thought—sending cipher messages to a housebreaker!"

"Hardly cipher—just plain fooling," said the girl. "If you go out, Hector, I advise you to try it on him."

"On him—whom?" asked Trentin innocently. Then his face changed, as he saw that he was expected to remember the message and deliver it.

"On our man, of course, you goose," she answered. "Good night, everybody. I'm going up. Let me know if we are burgled. I shan't hear it if we are—I'm too honestly sleepy to care."



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

Emily disposed her forces carefully, finding an opportunity to have a quiet word with Mrs. Dix and Mr. Pinnot. She put the former in a room adjoining the guest chamber, and left Mr. Pinnot in the hall below. She sat in her own room, in range of the open door, pretending to write until she heard her husband say a curt good night to Mr. Pinnot and come upstairs. He paid no attention to the light which streamed through her doorway, but went to his own room at the opposite side of the hall, and closed himself in.

For some minutes Emily sat with her head bowed upon the table, suffering in some of those many ways which even the less unhappy of womankind are destined to endure without outward sign. Then she arose and went across to her husband's door.

"Hector, dear," she said, knocking before she put her face down to the jamb, "do you need anything—are you all right?"

The suddenness with which he threw open his door startled her more than did his angry face.

"You don't need to ask me anything—any questions or anything," he said, "until you are prepared to answer a few yourself. You know what they are. I'm not going to ask them. I'm waiting to hear from you. Until I do so, I don't care how little I see of you. Good night!"

He shut the door in her face. Miserable, and with her strength all beaten down by what seemed to her his unnecessary cruelty, she returned to her own room to face alone the sleepless night. She saw that they must soon come to open conflict.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE RAJAHHRINA OF BAWHALPORE

**T**O Emily, flung into a big chair by the seaside window of her darkened room, it seemed that she was awakened less from sleep than from a somber reverie, the intensity of which had dulled her more superficial impressions for the time. At first she could not think what had aroused her. Then she saw, outside the uncurtained window, the shadow of someone standing on the long upper balcony which formed the roof of the main porch and ran half around the house. Rising quickly to examine the intruder with more care, she made out the substantial figure of Mrs. Dix, and at once threw open the window to admit her.

“Sh-h-h!” cautioned Mrs. Dix softly, and beckoned Emily toward the door leading into the upper hall with an extraordinary silence which almost provoked Emily’s suspicion that the widow had had previous experience in night-prowling. She turned the knob and opened the door just far enough to allow a view of the broad landing lit by the dim rays from below, where Mr. Pinnot was evidently on faithful guard. Without understanding this proceeding in the least, Emily waited in confidence of Mrs. Dix’s expectations, and was presently rewarded with the sight of Miss

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

Von Bianchi tiptoeing slyly toward Trentin's door. He was awaiting her, for before she reached it the door swung a little and he stepped noiselessly out into the hall.

She passed him something which he immediately stowed away in an inner pocket. She whispered for a second or two into an ear lowered close to her face, and then, seizing one of his hands in an impulsive gesture of encouragement, pressed it quickly between both of hers and retired to her own room.

Trentin crossed the landing and went down the stairs.

"Good evenin'," remarked Mr. Pinnot. They could not hear Trentin's answer, if he made any.

"I shouldn't advise it, if I was you," continued Mr. Pinnot.

"Thanks for the suggestion, Pinnot," replied Trentin; "we'll consider it on my return. I'll come in again in about an hour."

"It's a master dark night, sir," observed Mr. Pinnot kindly. "Speakin' as a private citizen, sir, I shouldn't advise goin' out in it. There ain't a light to be seen nowheres exceptin' in the Log House."

"That's all right," said Trentin. "I'll run over and see Whitehead. It's no use trying to sleep here."

"Mis' Trentin's orders," began Mr. Pinnot, "was that——"

"And my orders," interrupted Trentin, "happen to countermand hers. That's clear, isn't it? It's clear, isn't it, that I do as I please in my own house?"

"Sartain," assented Mr. Pinnot, skilfully trim-

## **THE RAJAHRINA OF BAWHALPORE**

ming his sails to meet the shifting wind. "Them sentiments would be mine, sir, if I ever was cast up high an' dry on the shoals of matrimony. Not bein' a marryin' man, sir, I sartain do appreciate your independence. It's more'n most o' these coal barges o' husbands darst to say, sir."

Mrs. Dix, listening carefully, was restrained with difficulty.

They heard Trentin laugh, and light a cigarette. Mr. Pinnot plainly interested him.

"Not a marrying man, eh, Pinnot?" he repeated encouragingly. "Well, that will save you considerable trouble in a good many ways."

"Not that I hain't hed the chanst, sir," protested Mr. Pinnot, with artless emphasis. "From one time to another I've hed it almost forced on me. There ain't much rest for a likely man these days—never was, nuther."

Mrs. Dix gripped the door with terrible force, and once more turned back to Emily.

"I can't stand it," she said wrathfully. "I've got to see Sam Pinnot this minute!"

"Hush!" whispered Emily. "Let us see what he is doing, first."

"They've hunted you good and hard, eh, Pinnot?" suggested Trentin. Mr. Pinnot rose to the bait with sportive alacrity.

"Hev' they!" he exclaimed significantly. "Hain't I never told ye how I eloped with the Rajahrina of ———"

"The what?" asked Trentin.

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"With the Rajahrina of Bawalpore—on elephant-back—one whole night of it!" declared the postmaster.

"Never!" replied Trentin.

"I ought to," said Mr. Pinnot, "it's a snorter. It ain't a long yarn, nuther. Could anybody hear me a-spinnin' of it—any womenfolks, I should say?"

"Come in here, there's time enough," said Trentin. They heard him walk into the library. "Fill one of those pipes and fire away. I wager it's a good one."

"A good one!" repeated Mr. Pinnot. "It would jest bile salt water! You see, sir, this Rajahrina of Bawalpore was the head peach of the——"

"It ain't no sich a thing!" whispered Mrs. Dix, as Captain Pinnot's free-flowing voice died away into an unintelligible murmur. "He's a-makin' it up out o' whole cloth. He never seen an elephant till last summer up to Bangor, to the circus."

"It's all right, Mrs. Dix," replied Emily, drawing her into the room and closing the door. "He's trying to help us by preventing the delivery of that message to Mr. Whitehead about Harrison's return. It will all be explained later. Just do as I say, now, please. Go back, by the balcony, to your own room, and then come out through the door to the hallway and switch on the lights at the button which is between your door and Miss Von Bianchi's. That will make her shut her door, where she has probably been listening, just as we have. I will then have an opportunity to come out and run down the rear stairway. As soon as I am gone, you can turn off the light and go into your room again, keep watch till I come back. Do you understand?"

## ***THE RAJAHRINA OF BAWHALPORE***

"Yes," said Mrs. Dix. "But Sam Pinnot never in all his life see no elephant."

"Never mind," said Emily, with a reassuring laugh, which came from no great depth, "hurry back now, while I get on my boots."

Mrs. Dix had the satisfaction of seeing her neighbor's door move quickly shut the instant the lights flared up in the hall. Emily darted out behind her and was down the rear stairs with successful care before Miss Von Bianchi, properly disheveled, threw open her door again and rushed out.

"What is it?" she cried, in a discreetly low voice. "I thought I heard burglars, and then the lights came on. Has anything happened?"

Mrs. Dix's sharp eyes had noticed the girl's quick glance toward Emily's half-opened door.

"Be quiet," she said, "you'll wake Mis' Trentin. I was after some water and turned on them pesky lights by mistake."

If this considerably mixed explanation was received with reserve by Miss Von Bianchi she made no mention of her suspicions. Mrs. Dix immediately switched off the lights and went into her own room, the door of which she left open. Miss Von Bianchi remained irresolutely on the landing for a moment or two and then, apparently satisfied, also returned and closed her door. Mrs. Dix took position where she could see the hall without being seen, and waited.

From below there floated up the fragrance of good tobacco, to which was semioccasionally added a smothered laugh from the audience for whom the veracious

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

Mr. Pinnot spun the marvelous yarn of Bawalpore. Then there was a ring at the side door. Mrs. Dix, understanding her part to be interference with her immediate neighbor, was in the hall and at the head of the stairs before the latter could gather up her voluminous robe de chambre and run out. She could not go down as she was, so, ignoring Mrs. Dix, she leaned over the rail and listened warily.

Trentin was at the door, answering the bell.

"Excuse me, Mr. Trentin," said the voice of the family coachman, "but Mr. Whitehead was up when I left there just now, and said I was to see you and ask if you or Miss Von Bianchi had any mail or anything for him. He saw your lights, he said."

"What were you doing at the Log House, Furbish," asked Trentin.

"Why, sir," replied the man in tones of embarrassment, "Thursday's my night for keeping company with Mr. Whitehead's cook, and——"

"Is she a good cook, Furbish?"

"Best in Oldport, sir, barring ours," responded Furbish with farsighted loyalty to both sides.

"Excellent!" cried Trentin. "You are forgiven. Here, take this note over to Mr. Whitehead with my compliments, and deliver it into his own hands. Not to the servants—not even to the second-best cook in Oldport—understand?"

"Sure!" said the enterprising Furbish, "I shouldn't mind going back, sir. Any answer?"

"No," replied Trentin. "Good night."

## **THE RAJAH RINA OF BAWHALPORE**

"That's all right," he called up to Miss Von Bianchi.  
"Go back to bed."

They went, if not to bed. Mrs. Dix heard Miss Von Bianchi lock her door, and rightly inferred that work was over in that quarter.

A few minutes later, having sent Furbish away to the barn with a grateful reward of words he immediately resolved he should never live long enough to forget, Emily crept upstairs and slipped into Mrs. Dix's room.

"I captured it!" she whispered quite triumphantly.  
"I routed Furbish out and made him tell that story. Wasn't he splendid?"

By the light of a candle in the clothes closet attached to that chamber, she read the interrupted message by which the pretty young spy who had so easily assailed the fancy of her easy-going husband had sought to inform the enemy and prevent the coming meeting:

Harrison is back and was at the Yard to-night with Mrs. T. They have postmaster and telegraph operator with them here now on guard to prevent my communicating with you. Their anxiety indicates attempt to spring something to-morrow's meeting. See me before you do anything. If you don't, do everything to prevent meeting. Go away, if possible, for the day. Very important. T. is all right, but indiscreet. Trust nothing to him except as messenger. Mrs. T. dangerous unless we can keep them apart. I can handle T.

Hurriedly,  
B.

After that Emily went to her own room, the message carefully folded into a secure place.



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

“Unless we can keep them apart!” She could not get that out of her mind. Indeed, she scarcely tried to. As she faced the dawn of another day of striving, she felt the little triumph of the night go down to less than nothing before the hurt which came to her with the thought that her successfully simulated acceptance of an outrageous situation no honest woman should have looked upon complacently, would be half the coming battle. Thus, sternly forcing back her pride, she waited in expectant misery for the day.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FRIDAY MEETING

EMILY had called the Friday meeting for nine o'clock. She knew when she saw Whitehead come into the office promptly to the hour that he suspected nothing, and that Miss Von Bianchi's efforts to inform him had been successfully checked.

"As I understand it," he remarked casually, "this isn't going to keep us long."

"Merely to settle some outstanding matters which ought not to hang open any longer," responded Emily. "You see, we're rather running at loose ends, now; don't you think so? We have an understanding among ourselves, but it isn't on record—your position, and things like that. It hasn't been easy to bring a one-man company up to date all at once in its bookkeeping. You can understand that?"

"I've found it so," he replied cordially, and added: "You've a wonderful head for business, Mrs. Trentin. What a man you'd have made! You would have built ships and things."

She rewarded him with her most brilliant smile.

"Perhaps," she said. "Now, then, we must call the meeting."

Trentin had been induced to drive her over. In spite

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

of what he had said to her the night before, she had been forced by every demand of prudence to ask him that favor, which he had unsuspectingly granted without deigning to enter argument on it. Leaving Mrs. Dix still on guard over Miss Von Bianchi, who was a notably late riser, Emily had thus been enabled to at once keep her husband where she could watch his movements as related to Whitehead and use him for a certain purpose to which his signature was absolutely vital.

He was sitting in the dogcart where she had asked him to await her, in a distant corner of the Yard, when she hurried out to him, a paper in her hand.

"You need not stay," she said. "I'm so grateful to you for having been so good to me this morning. All this here is mere form, you know. Just sign this proxy for me and then take the cart and drive back. We can finish here alone."

"This paper?" he asked, taking the slip she handed him together with a fountain pen hastily caught from the desk of a clerk which she had passed on coming out.

"Simply a proxy by which your stock can be voted in the meeting without you being there," she said. "Otherwise we shall have to ask you to remain for the forenoon. Just sign your name there—on that lower line. The other blanks are filled in."

"Certainly," he agreed readily, and, placing the paper over his knee, scratched his name upon it with the pen. "There you are."

"You're so kind about it," she said, taking the

## **THE FRIDAY MEETING**

paper from him, a little shyly, and, thinking of what he had said to her when he refused her entrance to his room.

"Oh, don't mention it," he responded distantly, and, gathering up the lines without looking at her again, whipped the pony impatiently out of the Yard. Emily's conscience might have entered in and ruined all her well-laid plans at that last moment but for her certain knowledge that Trentin's easy compliance was due solely to his desire to be away. With a poignant realization of the competition which was using her husband as its butt and center, she watched him go spinning up the road toward the links. And yet, even as she turned wearily toward the sharp work of the morning, the yearning disappointment in her heart was more than eased by the uplift of portending victory.

"Shall we begin?" she said to Mr. Whitehead a moment later. "You, as chairman of the board, will have to make a formal call to order."

"But have we stock enough present to carry on business?" he inquired. "My share is pretty small, you see. How about——?"

"I have my own stock, of course," explained Emily, "and we will call in the man who usually votes the proxies of the employees who hold stock. There are many of them."

"Why——" even Mr. Whitehead hesitated to mention the matter just then, "why, your man Harrison used to do that, didn't he, before he deserted us?"

Emily flushed hot at the use of an expression which

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

seemed to be growing uncomfortably common, but went straight on with what she had to do.

"Yes, Harrison does now," she answered. While she was speaking, she stepped toward the door of the inner office and tapped smartly. Harrison appeared on the instant, and, coming in, shut the door and locked it behind him.

"Well, I'll be—I *mean*— What does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Whitehead in amazement. "Where did you come from? Where have you been hiding yourself? What sort of a game is this, anyway?" He sprang to his feet in great excitement, completely taken by surprise.

"Is the meeting in order?" asked Harrison of Emily. "Then we'll rush it through and have it over with."

"I can accommodate you there, sir," interrupted Mr. Whitehead, his voice rising a little. "I declare this meeting adjourned for one week."

"Supposing we have a vote on that question, Mr. Whitehead," suggested Harrison. "I doubt the validity of that adjournment of yours."

"There's no quorum present," insisted Mr. Whitehead. "Where's Trentin? Why wasn't I informed of this?" He looked about so helplessly as to disclose his own knowledge that he was in a dangerous trap.

"Mr. Trentin is detained elsewhere," said Emily. "But I hold a proxy to vote all his stock. Harrison holds all the proxies of the stockholding employees, which he gathered up this morning early. That gives us all the stock for voting purposes, excepting yours."

## ***THE FRIDAY MEETING***

"About a hundred to one, I should say," added Harrison. "I guess your motion to adjourn doesn't exactly go, Mr. Chairman."

"But I do, my young friends," said Mr. Whitehead, pitching his hat onto his head and starting for the door. "I decline to stay. You're a pair of sneaking tricksters, and I won't recognize any such piratical proceeding as a legal meeting."

But as he turned to leave, he found Harrison in front of him, back to the door.

"Yes, you will recognize it," said Harrison. "You'll recognize these proceedings all right. And before you recognize these proceedings you'll apologize to Mrs. Trentin——"

"Please don't bring me in!" cried Emily. "I don't mind."

Really, she scarcely did mind things of that sort, now.

"Be still!" retorted Harrison roughly. "You'll apologize to Mrs. Trentin, I say, Whitehead, for your remarks about tricksters and so forth. If you don't I'll knock you down right where you stand. This isn't an argument. It's final. Now you do as I say!"

"Of course I apologize, as any gentleman would," said Mr. Whitehead. "Not on account of these fool threats, though. But this meeting, sir, I'll never recognize. Get out of my way or you'll suffer for it later! Clear out, now! I'm going."

Harrison stepped forward quickly and reached one swift arm so that he could grasp the other man by the loose part of his buttoned-up jacket.

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"No, you're not going, either," he said, always in his low voice, and taking a firm grip on the cloth, "You're not going, and you're not going to call for help, and you're not going to do anything but what you're told. You can't meet this situation with any of your methods or with cipher messages. You've got to use my method, and my method is force. You've got to use force with me, and you know you haven't got it to use! Your bluff is called!"

He pushed his captive in the direction of the chair, and, when he had him in range, fairly threw him backward into it. Mr. Whitehead's hat bounced off and spun around on the floor. His face was waxy pale.

"You sit down!" commanded Harrison, quite unnecessarily. "Don't you dare move or open your mouth until you're told to do so! If you do, something worse than dynamite will strike you. If I hear a word out of you, you miserable old whelp of an international——"

"Harrison!" gasped Emily. She was trembling with an overexcitement which had her on the verge of a nervous outburst of tears. She could not bear another exhibition of unthinking fury such as he was working himself up to now.

"Be still!" he ordered, in the same rough tone. "Now I've got him I'm going to make him sweat some! Now, then, don't either of you interrupt me. This is my meeting, and it's going to be done my way. Sit still until I bring some papers."

He fumbled at his desk, in one corner of the room. Emily looked at Whitehead. His color was utterly



“‘Don’t you dare move or open your mouth until you’re told to do so!’”



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## ***THE FRIDAY MEETING***

gone, and he sat crouched down in his chair, where Harrison had thrown him, staring fixedly before him and now and then closing his eyes for intervals of several seconds, only to reopen them with that same unseeing gaze. She pitied him sincerely enough to feel a special distaste for the curiously unwomanly position into which Fortune had forced her. Slipping silently out of her chair, she picked up Whitehead's hat and placed it on his knees. He made no sign of acknowledgment, or shifted ever so little the position of his eyes. Harrison returned presently with some papers spread out like cards in his hands.

"Mr. Chairman," he began.

The man in the chair sat up with heavy slowness, and, after a painfully visible effort, brought his eyes around to Harrison's and threw into them some expression of understanding. Harrison, who acted as secretary of the board, went through the usual preliminaries.

"I now move," he said, "that the notes made by this concern to secure a certain loan of two hundred thousand dollars be taken up——"

"What!" ejaculated Mr. Whitehead, shocked into restoration of some part of his fighting power.

"How?" demanded Emily in the same breath. Harrison had not told her the details of his plan.

"—Be taken up by the payment of the loan to the creditor, one Whitehead, in full, in cash," went on Harrison. "I suppose it is a vote, Mr. Chairman."

"It is, I suppose," assented Whitehead wearily, "if you think you can really do it. I won't accept any-

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

thing but cash, though," he interjected peevishly. "No more notes or extensions, or anything like that. You pay in cash, in full, or I'll foreclose this morning."

His temper was coming back to him, and Harrison declined to let him go on.

"I suppose," he remarked, "a cashier's check for two hundred thousand dollars and accrued interest at five per cent would be regarded by the creditor as cash, Mr. Chairman? I hold here such a check, dated today, and properly certified, which I hereby tender in payment of the notes. That's acceptable?"

Whitehead rose unsteadily.

"It has to be acceptable," he said in a voice so low they could scarcely hear him. "I can't legally decline it. Those notes read that way. I don't want the money. I want that cruiser—I suppose you understand why and for whom?"

He suddenly came completely out of the half-dreamy dejection into which his defeat had plunged him, and sticking his hands into his coat pockets in a jauntily businesslike air, came forward until he stood close to both Emily and Harrison.

"See here, my friends," he said, "I'm beaten, and I know it. It was your move, and you cornered me. Very well. I never whine about losses. It's done and that ends it. Now, then, let's start afresh. I want that cruiser, you know why! She means a lot more than two hundred thousand dollars to me and my friends. I'm bound to have her some way or other. You need money. It's all right both ways."

He paused for just a second or two.

## ***THE FRIDAY MEETING***

"Are my sealed papers still in your safe here? Yes. Send in for them, will you?"

"They're here," replied Harrison, producing them. "I took them out this morning to turn back to you. I don't want them here."

"Thanks," responded Whitehead without allowing the implied insolence to break down his growing good nature. "You didn't know the notes were there, of course? That would have been a fine opening for you two clever people!"

He tore open the big envelope which Harrison handed him and drew out the notes from the folded papers packed inside.

"Here are your notes, Harrison," he said. "You have the certified check in your own hands. Take the notes, keep the check, and let me steal that cruiser when she's ready for sea. You understand me?"

"I'm not so innocent as all that," replied Harrison. "I understand well enough, and I decline with thanks."

"Want something for yourself, perhaps?" suggested Whitehead. "Natural enough. Why not? Say, ten thousand."

"No."

"I mean ten apiece, of course; for you and for your—for the lady."

Emily found herself unable to bear the insult, and walked away to the window on a pretense of looking out.

"Sorry I can't accommodate you," said Harrison. "Let's see those notes. Hand them over. One, two,

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

three, four—all right. Here's your money. Just sign this receipt also. Sit here. Good. That's all. I move we adjourn. That's a vote, isn't it?"

"Oh, I suppose it has to be," answered Whitehead regretfully.

"On your way, then," said Harrison. "You're done. From this morning no one, not even stockholders—not even Mrs. Trentin herself—can enter this Yard without a permit signed by me. I'm boss, and I'm going to rule. No 'ifs' or 'ands'! You clear out, Whitehead! You can't have the Twenty-Nine, and you can't have anything!"

At the door Whitehead wheeled with so curious a look on his face that Harrison followed him out into the corridor.

"I will have her!" he said, when they were out of Emily's hearing. "I'll have her, and before I'm done with it I'll have you—by Heaven, I will!"

Once more Harrison reached out his short arm and hooked it into Whitehead's jacket. He shook him violently two or three times and then hurled him headlong through the open doorway. He went staggering out under the impetus of the blow and toppled to his knees on the grassy stones of the Yard. As he regained his balance and stood up he faced toward Harrison, waiting in the doorway, and bent upon him that same colorless countenance which had been the expression of his anger after the earlier assault. His lips trembled so that he could just speak. He looked like a man on the verge of a complete break-down.

"This goes now, you beast!" he said thickly. "You

## ***THE FRIDAY MEETING***

can whip me by bull strength every time. I'm too old a man to fight you that way. But I've a better head than you and I'll win out with it. I'll have that ship and I'll have you, just for what you've done to me to-day. Don't forget that when your time comes, and it will be coming soon. No more bribes for you, Harrison. My next call on you will be with a bullet. If you can't take money, you'll take cold lead—you——"

Harrison shut the door on him and his threats. When he reëntered the board room he found Emily crying quietly by herself in the corner behind his desk.

"What's this?" he demanded. "Going under?"

"I saw you throw him again," she said, looking about, wet-eyed and quavering. "It wasn't kind of you. He's an old man, Harrison, and it nearly broke his heart. This business has made a brute of you; you're so harsh and—uncompromising and impatient."

He laughed shortly.

"There isn't time for good manners," he said. "I don't apologize for anything. I wasn't trained to be gentle—like Trentin was, for instance. We grew up here together, alongside each other. He was taking music lessons when I was learning to rivet armor plate and scrap with the labor unions. He's one extreme—I'm the other. Neither one of us is much good for women like you. He ain't, anyhow."

"That's not the question, Harrison," said Emily quickly. "I must remind you that we are here to talk business."

"He ain't, anyway," persisted Harrison defiantly. "He's the worst enemy we've got now, not forgetting

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

Whitehead. How long you going to let him go on as he's going now? You know what I mean, don't you? What's your idea about it? I've been wondering."

Emily dried her face and went over near him.

"Harrison," she said looking him close in the eyes, "once and for all let me tell you this much about something it is no part of your business, or anybody's, to meddle with. I am familiar with every little detail of my husband's movements—his work, his pleasures, his friendships, and everything. Relative to them and to what you have just been hinting at, I can tell you, and you are on no account to forget it, that I am perfectly and absolutely satisfied with things as they are, and that my husband's conduct has my fullest encouragement in every particular. I regard him above all other men, and shall do so as long as I live. Is that clear to you now?"

Harrison's steady and cynical gaze could not overwhelm hers, and he swung away busily to his work.

"All right," he said, laughing awkwardly. "Now, then, you let me alone altogether until you hear from me. When I need you I'll send. Before you know it, the cruiser will be ready for sea. Then I'll surprise you some day soon. We've got to go easy. As Whitehead says, we can't give him *all* away without hurting ourselves. I told that to the Department, and they will lie low till we sing out. We've gained one on him to-day. There's only one more, and that is when the ship is ready to start. We can do it. There's no use being nervous. You notice he didn't

## **THE FRIDAY MEETING**

say anything about blowing her up, to-day. That was bluff."

"The man in the window isn't," suggested Emily.

"That's right, agreed Harrison, "and that's one reason why I don't want you coming around here unless it's necessary. We've got to run some risk—and I'm the one for that. The dynamite story was bluff, and they won't shoot me until there's something to gain by it. They figure the same way we do. Whitehead has lost his control here. The only thing left for him to do is to wait till the ship is finished and get her away if he can. Until then he might as well keep his hands off me. My time will come the day we get up steam in her, and I'll have something to say about that. So will the navy. About that time they'll come down and gobble up Whitehead and his sharpshooters; and until then—well, Whitehead is no fool. I'm safe for the present—and I ain't very much frightened, anyhow."

His swagger suited the moment. She liked it. It chimed, in its masculine way, with her own supreme rejoicing that they were reprieved from what had menaced her and Trentin, and that there was yet more time in which to come through safely. That was enough to make her patient at the thought of keeping up pretenses longer in her house.

"Where did you find the money?" she asked, with a friendly smile of pride and gratitude.

"Borrowed it in New York from a fellow that used to know us down here," said Harrison. "It was a pull, but I got it—never mind how. He doesn't know



## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

what a risk he ran. By the time he does we'll all be safe. No use worrying him."

"But it won't be long?" urged Emily. Already her heart looked forward to better days, when she and Trentin would come back into Eden.

"Leave it to me," he said curtly. "I'm boss and I'm going to keep everybody out. Good-by."

Feeling the pressure of his wish to be rid of her, Emily left the office. He followed to let her out the main door, and there, to thank him for his work of the morning and his successful preparation for it, she gave him her hand. He held it so closely she could not draw it away immediately. Her ineffectual struggle to do so embarrassed her and gave him undue advantage.


"That was a good bluff *you* made about—about things, a minute ago," he said, in that tone of ungentle impudence he had assumed with his victory. "But you can't look me in the face again like that and say you're happy!"

Probably because he did not choose to hold her, she tore her hand away and left the Yard. The haggard, piteous face of Whitehead, lit with the pallid glow of a flickering hatred, clung in her mind—that and her own tears, Harrison's wonderful resourcefulness and courage, his straightforward attack upon the unhappiness she was treasuring with the hope that no one knew of it; and his great physical strength and the masterful way he had of looking into her eyes as he held her hand. Without venturing to analyze her attitude toward him, or his toward her, she realized that she

## ***THE FRIDAY MEETING***

had a lively fear of this brawny boss who had assumed command of their affairs. Was he assuming command of her? Sure and well ordered as was her nature, Emily experienced a strange and oversweeping physical thrill at the thought. Reflecting upon the morning's work as its events took place and meaning in her rapidly calming mind, the central fact seemed to be that Harrison's domination, rough and masculine and irresistible as it was, had been in no final way displeasing. Indeed, that thrill with which she remembered anew each incident of the meeting was one of new and mysterious bodily delight. She could not deny it; and the guilt she felt thereat gave added weight to the burden she was shouldering.

They must keep Harrison in line. He must not become so satisfied with his control as to feel independent of them, or ever to think that he might as well act on alone. But the new knowledge that by playing upon a certain influence of which he was obviously and rapidly getting to be a victim, she could hold him where she pleased—that she could make herself mistress of the whole great case if only she would yield a bit to this man who was himself its key—gave her no gratification when she considered what, to a man of his unordered nature, surrender to her influence must mean.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE OLDPORT COAL TRUST

**I**F the net results of Friday's meeting were not visibly manifest, they were not the less effective in the direction of Cruiser Twenty-Nine. At each day's end the ship was nearer to getting under way than she had been at the close of the day before, and Emily knew, by frequent conferences with Harrison, sometimes at the Yard, sometimes during more or less chance meetings in the town, that the last things were being done.

Harrison's manner annoyed her less than her own attitude toward it. The supreme self-confidence given him by his successful hunt for financial relief, she both admired and disliked; and she was not entirely pleased by his failure to admit her to a knowledge of how he had secured the money. She remembered, with a kind of animal fear, his treatment of Whitehead on the morning of the meeting. She resented the complete command which he, not only for years a subordinate and outsider, but a man of lesser class than hers and Trentin's, had assumed at the Yard. Yet, when all these were not forgotten, her healthy conscience joined with her natural sense of justice in forcing her to acknowledge the propriety—even the necessity—of his

## **THE OLDPORT COAL TRUST**

abrupt creation of a new and unquestioned authority; and she felt glad, in spite of every opposite influence, to be acting in the service of one who knew his way and was not afraid.

She was no more able than the run of living things is able to resist the power of a firm, fearless, and unhesitating control, nor to rebel in any serious way when its grasp tightened to a grip of pain. Argue with herself as she would, it ever remained that she was glad to help. To her, who never consciously deceived herself about anything, it was difficult to know whether she was more enthusiastic over assisting Harrison to put the ship to sea, or over the saving of her husband's name from the lasting ignominy a foreign sell-out would bring upon it. This conflict of her sense of the larger question with her merely innocent, adventurous spirit, rendered her on the one hand cautious in her labors with Harrison, and on the other unusually lenient toward Trentin in the face of a provocation she could not have endured, and which no good, bad, or indifferent woman could have endured, under circumstances less vitally connected with the main purpose of her existence.

"This coming over here on demand isn't all it might be for you," remarked Harrison one morning at the Yard. "I've been thinking it over. We'd better have some other place, outside the Yard, to meet in."

"I don't mind coming over—in the least," she protested, not so vigorously as she felt. "I like to see the cruiser as often as I can."

"Whitehead's people can see you, though, with the

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

glasses," said Harrison, "and keep tab on every visit you make and how long you stay. That's no good. I've decided we must get together somewhere outside the Yard. That's fixed. I leave it to you to name a place."

"Very well," she replied quickly. "At the post office."

"The post office?" he repeated. Harrison's unpsychological make-up sometimes encountered situations the dislike of which his face could not conceal.

"The exact place!" she declared. "By all means the most convenient for me, and absolutely safe."

"All right," he agreed. Whatever his hopes had been he pressed them no further.

"Now, then," he went on immediately, "I want to get you to help me buy coal. No matter how good a ship you've got you can't do tricks with her unless she can get up steam. Whitehead knows that as well as we do, and he's lying so low and keeping so quiet I shouldn't wonder if he had something like this on his own mind. If he could shut off our coal supply he'd have us tied to a post. He wouldn't have to use any dynamite on a ship with no fires in her. He wouldn't be liable for punishment, either, if he worked it right, and you bet he knows how! I've put the thing off too long—had too many other things of the same kind.

"Now here you have it: There's two thousand tons in and around Oldport, and we want all of it. We don't want to boost the price, though, by letting anybody know how bad. Whitehead probably knows by this time that while I was away I arranged to have a

## **THE OLDPORT COAL TRUST**

train load of picked coal come down for the trial trip, and that it will be under guard of the navy crew the Department is going to send just before we get ready to let the cruiser go. I'm so sure he knows that, that I'm going to buy up this Oldport coal on the quiet and get it into her bunkers some way. Then, while he's laying for the picked train load, I'll sneak the navy crew in some other way and leave him wondering what happened. We'll buy the local coal in small lots, a little at a time, as next winter's supply for the machine shop and power house. You go around and see the dealers. Whitehead won't have you shadowed to a coal office. You can get most of them to promise to deliver on some certain day. Tell each one not to give you away—it'll hold 'em, for they're all cutting each other's throats, very neighborly."

"How much can we pay?" asked Emily.

"What they ask will be all right," replied Harrison. "Don't worry about that. Simply let every one of them feel that if they sit tight they can sell out their summer stock for cash. They'll bite, all right. Just look out they don't bite you, that's all!"

Emily drove away into the town, trying to forget something which Harrison's manner of speaking to her had suggested. It was not at all the first time she had bought a winter's coal, and she believed she knew little enough about navy fuel to render the real meaning of her errand safe from inadvertent disclosure.

"I'm buying coal for the machine shop, Mr. Daggett," she explained, as she drew up in front of the

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

first little box of a coal office to which she came. "I was wondering if you could manage to supply us?"

"Would ye want more'n two ton?" he asked, a little more anxiously, she thought, than the occasion need demand.

"Why, yes," laughed Emily. "Two tons wouldn't carry us far. Why do you ask?"

"Because I'm under contract to turn over all my stock an' all I get in the next ninety days to a certain party," was the reply. "But I can sell not over two ton to any one that's a-sufferin' for it."

"Business is good, then, isn't it?" exclaimed Emily. "Who can be buying all that coal? Oh, I suppose it's Mr. Barbour for the steamboats."

"No, ma'am," said Mr. Daggett. "It ain't Cap'n Barbour, an' I don't believe it's for no steambo'ts. It's—" he checked himself regretfully. "Good mornin', ma'am," he said. "Sorry!"

Emily scarcely stopped to think as she reined her pony around into Main Street and stopped before Henley's Coal and Wood Office, next to Meguire's store.

"Turrible sorry, Mis' Trentin," announced old Mr. Henley, who had hobbled out on a stick and with one lame foot in a superannuated crocheted slipper. "Our folks is under contract for every ton in the sheds. Can't let one customer hev' a mite over two ton to onct, nuther. We gut winter price in spot cash, delivery later, an' mortal flesh an' blood couldn't shy 'round thet—my suz!"

"Haven't you more on the way?" asked Emily.

"We hev'," declared the old gentleman with a happy

## **THE OLDPORT COAL TRUST**

grin, "an' we've sold it on them same terms, too. Reg'lar coal trust right here in Oldport Harbor, I swanny! Short of it is, ma'am, our folks hes agreed to sell every pound we order for the nex' ninety days."

"To whom, Mr. Henley?" inquired Emily as artlessly as she knew how.

"To a certain party," he replied, backing off to less uncertain ground. "Sorry, Mis' Trentin. Good day."

"Say!" he shouted, when she was half across the street on her way to the post office. She pulled the pony around to where he stood. "You couldn't git along with two ton, or sech a matter, could ye?" he urged insinuatingly. "Our folks 'd make the price right, seein' it's you."

"I'm afraid not," she responded, as patiently as was possible under the circumstances. "Thank you, though."

In the middle of the wide thoroughfare she stopped sharply again. Mr. Barbour, the steamboat man, was coming from the opposite direction.

"What must we pay for coal to-day, Captain Barbour?" she called, halting him. "I'm trying to buy some."

"So be I," he replied, with evident irritation. "Somebody's cornered the market somehow or other. I'd be——"

Emily was away before he finished, the whole situation appearing to her at once. Hitching the pony under the horse shed, she hurried into the post office and called Harrison on the telephone to meet her there at once. Even in the rush of the moment she was re-



## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

lieved, in some inexplicable way, to see that his plan for an outside rendezvous was justified by circumstances quite as much as it could have been by any personal wish of his.

"Mis' Trentin," said the postmaster, as she left the telephone, "hev' you spoke to Mis' Dix this mornin'?"

He winked one eye mischievously. Emily looked across the store at the telegraph office and noticed Mrs. Dix standing with her face to the window in that obviously unseeing attitude which indicates wrought feelings too tumultuous for words.

"She's got a new boss," added Mr. Pinnot, "an' he don't seem to sort of set right on her in-di-gestion. I've—" again he delivered a solemnly sly wink which wrinkled all one side of his russet face— "I've be'n a-speakin' to her about it. Hadn't ye better take the matter up with her, Mis' Trentin?"

"A new 'boss'?" repeated Emily. "What do you mean, Captain Pinnot? I supposed Mrs. Dix was independent."

"Mis' Dix is," assented the postmaster, "but the telegraph office hain't. Mr. Whitehead hes got control of the telegraph company, an' hes give orders that Mis' Dix can't sort o' stummick. One of 'em is——"

He rambled on in a cautious undertone, but Emily did not hear him. When Harrison came in, a few minutes afterwards, she had the whole story ready for the telling.

"Mr. Whitehead has bought up the local coal supply," she announced as soon as they were seated in the back room, with the postmaster on guard just outside,

## **THE OLDPORT COAL TRUST**

"and has contracted to take every cargo that arrives during the next three months. He has paid cash in advance for all the stock in the sheds here, and that was enough, at this season, to tie up every dealer to him."

"It's illegal!" exclaimed Harrison. "We can sue——"

"No, we can't," said Emily. "You know we can't. We must have that coal on board the cruiser long before any court would even take notice of the case. You know well enough that it's only a matter of days, now."

"Right! Then we must wire for a rush order to be shipped in by rail."

"Mr. Whitehead, they say, has got control of the branch telegraph line, too."

"But Mrs. Dix is still the operator, isn't she?"

"Yes."

"She'll send anything we want."

"I don't like to be objecting to everything all the time," said Emily, "but the real question is, will the other end of the line take and deliver anything we want?"

Harrison sprang up and called in Mrs. Dix.

"No," she replied to his question. "I'd do it, but they've changed operators on the other end. It's a man, now, an' I hain't acquainted with him, an' he's," Mrs. Dix's face grew cold and stern, "he's the disagreeable kind of a man."

"Disagreeable?" asked Harrison. "How can a man be disagreeable two or three hundred miles away?"

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"We've hed some words," explained Mrs. Dix briefly. Then her eyes flashed with still-smoldering fires. "He sassed me in code this mornin'. I ain't up on code, but I guess I soon will be!"

She straightened the front of her dress and slicked back her hair.

"It wouldn't be safe to try it," said Emily. "The change means something, you may be sure. Has Mr. Whitehead given you any special orders, Mrs. Dix?"

"He come in this mornin'," responded the widow, emitting more fire in the direction of the outer world, "an' told me I was under his orders, an' showed me his papers to that effect. I'd jest hed orders by wire, anyhow, so I wa'n't much surprised. Then he says, says he: 'Would you care to remain as operator?' says he.

"'Not a mite longer 'n anybody wants me to,' says I. 'I've got lots to do, an' my fall dressmakin' ain't even begun on yit,' says I.

"'You may remain,' says he, 'under sartain new rules an' regulations.'

"'New what?' says I.

"'Rule One,' he says, 'is there ain't a-goin' to be no blabbin' about town of the business of the company,' says he. 'Rule Two is thet you'll be fired if you ever give away anything in any message,' says he. 'An' Rule Three is that what we need is a man, but you can stay if you'll obey orders and don't talk so much. Understand?' says he.

"'Yes,' I says, 'I understand. And,' I says, 'you couldn't git no one else, anyhow, because there hain't

## **THE OLDPORT COAL TRUST**

another operator this side o' Bucksport, an' he's deaf as a haddock an' hain't got only one leg which hain't wood,' I says.

" 'Very well,' says he, short. 'Git to work an' send this message right now.' An' the fact thet I hain't hed no conversation with him sence ain't worryin' me a mite."

"Has Whitehead been sending you in a good volume of business in the last week or so?" asked Harrison suddenly. "Have you a lot of sent telegrams on file?"

"Yes, sir, I hev'," replied Mrs. Dix. She studied his face for a few seconds before she understood him.

"Yes," she repeated, and then producing a small bunch of keys, handed them to him and added: "Couldn't you do an errand for me while I'm a-settin' along with Mis' Trentin?"

"In a minute," replied Harrison, with alacrity.

"Jest you bring me my silver pencil out of the second right-hand drawer in my desk in the telegraph office."

"Certainly," assented Harrison, taking the keys. Mrs. Dix discreetly turned her back to the doorway. In five minutes he was in the room again.

"I couldn't find it, Mrs. Dix," he said. "Won't you step out and try?"

As soon as they were alone, Harrison looked at Emily with a face from which much of the confidence had gone.

"No wonder he's been lying low," he said. "He's just been tying me up and letting me spend money

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

and do all the work for nothing. It's a case of coal coming cheaper than dynamite, that's all. He's probably working some other game all the time, and blocking us off till he gets ready to spring it. His telegrams out there are all in cipher, excepting one, and are addressed to some agent of his in the city. I don't know what code he's using. But in the first one he sent he said: 'Notify B. I want full terms Rebate Two enforced against all other parties shipping coal into Old-port next ninety days.' Do you understand that? No? It means, I think, that for the next ninety days prohibitive rates will be charged by all connecting railway lines on coal shipped in here by anyone excepting Whitehead—that's what rebates in general mean. 'Full terms' probably means that anybody who wants coal bad enough to pay the rate is to be boycotted on cars. They'll simply be told there's a shortage in freight cars, or a strike, or something like that. That's the regular system in these hellish times, and Whitehead's most likely a part of it. If we get Washington to stop him, he'll just stop us!"

"How about passenger cars?" asked Emily.

"Cheer up!" answered Harrison impatiently. "I might have known I was wasting breath trying to tell you all that. I forgot—the Department told me there was a big ring trying to hold up the President and prevent war."

She did not reply, and he sat with his head bent, in a confused effort at thought.

"We couldn't ship that coal in by water in less than six weeks," he said, "even if we could manage to steal

## **THE OLDPORT COAL TRUST**

some somewhere on the seaboard. It's next to impossible to find anything bigger than a fifty-ton schooner just now, and we want it before six days. I waited too long."

"Harrison," announced Emily, "I think I have a plan. I'm not sure, but I think so. Can you give me two days to go over it in?"

"That's about all I can give you," he answered dubiously. "After that we must manage something or lose everything." He rose and went pacing up and down the room in a desperation of disappointment. Some of the boastful confidence of his battling came back upon him now as he stood in the advancing shadow of defeat. "Are you in earnest?" he demanded, halting in front of Emily, and plainly fearful of her answer. She felt a double satisfaction in seeing that he needed her in the crisis after all.

"I am thoroughly in earnest," she replied, "but I don't know as I am on the right track. Perhaps you would better not press me for details until I've worked them out a little—not just now. Let me think for two days; don't try to see me at all. I may even be out of Oldport, or somewhere. Then I'll let you know it all and see what you think. We are very near being beaten, aren't we?"

"We are being," he said.

"But we aren't—yet," replied she, with spirit. "Unless you have a better idea——"

"Don't let that irritate you," declared Harrison. "I haven't an idea in my head. I'm going now. I've got to. We may as well keep her moving. They won't

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

try any dynamite tricks while they've got hands like this coming to them. We'll send for the navy crew somehow or other, though I suppose they won't want her if— Look here!" he stopped walking, and spun on his heels to look into her face. "Look here! Do you know what! What was the good of Whitehead paying in cash for coal he wasn't going to use? He's going to use that. He's going to wait till we get the ship finished enough to go to sea, and then he's going to take her away from us, bunker his coal he's bought here, and skip out with her! You see? He's going to let us do the work, and then come in and steal her!"

"Certainly he is," responded Emily. "That's part of what I have in my mind just now. Please don't mix me up by trying to worry it out of me. We've lost so much time already two more days won't matter now."

For a little he stood looking at her, wanting to say something and not knowing the right ways to make it gentle and, as it seemed to him, acceptable to her. His own roughness got in his way at times like this. The knowledge of his vital need of her humbled him, and he would have liked the gift of pleasant speech.

"Emily," he said, rather blurting it out at her—this first free use of her name—"you're—you're—great!"

And then already she was on her way. Next morning, when he tried to communicate with her, he found that, as she had warned him, she was out of Oldport Harbor.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE YARN OF THE ROYAL TAR

**N**O, Mis' Philbrick," said Mr. Pinnot from behind the dry goods' counter in his unofficial mercantile capacity and responding to that lady's confidential question, "I don't pusionally nor officially know nuthin' about Mis' Trentin's whereabouts, an' I don't take no great sight o' interest in 'em nuther. Did you say four yards o' drillin' an' a pint o' maple surrup—yes'm, genu-ine surrup, right straight from Vermont, an' it says so on the can—An' if Mis' Trentin——"

"She certain ain't to home," insisted Mrs. Philbrick. "Ed Haskins was in to see the doctor about his wife's sciaticy this mornin' an' said right up an' down thet he knowed it straight from Mis' Cap'n Mitchell's sister, who's be'n a-cleanin' house at the Burrowses', next to Mis' Trentin's. What do you s'pose, now?"

"I s'pose," answered the postmaster, "that if Mis' Trentin hain't to home, she's some'eres else. There's your two fathom o' drillin'. That all, ma'am? Yes, ma'am. All well over to your place, be they? That's right. Mornin'!"

When his customer had departed with her two



## THE MASTER BUILDERS

fathoms of plain drilling stowed comfortably under one arm and the Genuine Vermont, via Chicago, maple syrup under the other, Mr. Pinnot went over and leaned on the counter where Mrs. Dix was fashioning a Sunday bonnet between the demands of her duties as town telegrapher.

"Did you notice Mis' Philbrick, jest now?" he asked.

"I noticed she'd hed her black silk turned sence last Sunday," she replied, "if you're a-referrin' to that."

"She's one o' them that's alwers remindin' me of Sim Walker's gy-raffe."

"Sim Walker's what?" demanded Mrs. Dix.

"Gy-raffe," repeated the postmaster. "He was alwers a-stickin' of his nose into somebody else's business. There's a lot of folks around Oldport Harbor that hes gy-raffe necks on otherwise consid'able human figgers."

"That's a reg'lar laybel!" declared Mrs. Dix. "It ain't right to talk so about your own folks."

"If you could 'a' seen Sim Walker's gy-raffe," replied Mr. Pinnot, "you'd understand a sight better'n I could tell it to ye."

"Nobody's asked you to tell it around here!" asserted Mrs. Dix with spirit.

"I ain't a-goin' to tell it, nuther," retorted the postmaster. "I was only a-thinkin', though, that 'twas in '54 or '56, I don't exactly place it which, when the side-wheeler *Royal Tar* was burned to the water's edge an' blowed up, down in Eggemoggin Reach between Sargentville an' Birce's Island. I was fust

## THE ROYAL TAR

mate, cook, crew, an' bottlewasher them days, in the morphadite brig *Tilly C.*, with Cap'n Tobi' Jackson——"

"Wa'n't Cap'n Tobias Jackson never in nuthin' where you wa'n't?" interrupted Mrs. Dix.

"Not till after his funeral," admitted the postmaster, with evasive dignity. "That summer," he continued, "the side-wheeler *Royal Tar*, out of Boston for Halifax with a circus an' mee-nagerie for a decklo'd an' the show folks for parsengers, was pro-ceedin' east'ard through the Reach when she got a-fire—no one never knowed jest how—an' the skipper he beached her on Birce's Island an' let her burn down, which was all he could do, anyway. No human lives was lost, an' most of the animals in the mee-nagerie got loose and swum ashore wherever they could git a welcome, an' not infrequent where the reception committees was a-waitin' of 'em with shotguns an' rat p'ison.

"The *Tilly C.* was a-layin' over to Sargentville for a couple o' dozen crates for MacIntyre's store up to Winterport. We see the fire and started to row over to help put her out, when Cap'n Tobi', who was a-settin' in the stern to let me row, sings out:

" 'Way 'nough, Pinnot,' says he, 'what'n Time's this a-comin' up ahead?'

"It was some animal a-swimmin' toward the *Tilly C.* A little mite of a head was a-showin' out o' water, with two little stumps o' horns on the top of it.

" 'Looks like a sheep, cap'n,' says I. 'Hadn't we better salvage him?'

" 'It ain't decent to let the critter drownd right here

## THE MASTER BUILDERS

alongside,' says the skipper. 'Besides,' he says, sort of to himself, 'sheep's wuth six dollars apiece over to Portland jest now, an' it ain't wuth a cent in the middle of Eggemoggin Reach!'

"The result was we took that sheep in tow, with a spare oar under his chin to keep him up, an' put about for the *Tilly C*. The fellers that was a-workin' on the fire never noticed us, so's our consciences was consid'able clear, by tidy!"

"It wa'n't no better'n stealin' a sheep," remarked Mrs. Dix severely.

"It wa'n't nuther!" replied Mr. Pinnot, with more decision than usual. "If it hadn't be'n for us comin' along jest then, an' the *Tilly C*. a-layin' to Sargentville for them crates for MacIntyre's store, there wouldn't 'a' be'n no sheep. So it wa'n't no stealin' to accept what Proverdenge dumped right into our dory, by tidy! Besides, we didn't keep him, nuther.

"We run inshore jest astern o' the *Tilly C*., an' I was goin' to beach the dory when I felt a yank on the towline. The critter was a-risin' right up out o' water.

"'Here!' hollered the skipper. 'What's he a-doin' of? What's under him? There's three good fathom o' water where he is now.'

"But the critter kep' on a-comin', an' he kep' on a-risin', an' both of us jumped out and run up the beach like sixty.

"'By thunderin' tidy, Pinnot,' says Cap'n Tobl', 'that critter's all neck! We must 'a' stretched him awful, a-comin' in!'

"'I do pull a pretty good stroke,' says I. 'You

## THE ROYAL TAR

ought to hev' give him more slack. You should 'a' be'n more careful, cap'n, because he ain't our sheep, an'——'

" 'Thunder, Pinnot,' the skipper says, 'look at his legs, 'will ye! An' he's still a-comin'! That's the darndest, thump'imest sheep I ever see. He's a reg'lar—a reg'lar daddy longlegs! No wonder that circus could afford to travel by steam packet! "

" 'I tell you what he is, cap'n,' I says, 'he ain't no sheep at all; he's a gy-raffe, which I ain't never seen, but they're in the spellin' book at Hampden Lower Corner.'

" 'Sho!' says he. 'So 'tis. I might a-knowed it by his head. But I was alwers nervous at fires, Pinnot. It's a wonder you didn't speak of it before.'

" He was some mad because I'd named the critter fust.

" 'Never mind, cap'n,' says I, 'he appears to be harness-broke. Why don't you sell him to Sim Walker over to the Marsh? "

" Sim Walker had sold the skipper a pertikler ornery russet-colored mare for fam'ly drivin', an' the skipper an' Mis' Jackson was both of 'em lyin' awake nights for a chancet to git even. We run down an' made the critter fast where he could rest. He was the tallest animile you ever see, an' he hed a big leather harness onto him, an' was apparent sound an' kind.

" 'How so?' says the skipper all of a sudden. 'How about Sim Walker?' An' then he began laughin' all to himself an' told me we wouldn't wait for no butter, an' to get the live stock aboard an' put

## THE MASTER BUILDERS

for home. We got the gy-raffe on deck easy enough, him bein' quite a traveled animile, an' no one noticed us, bein' too busy seein' the fire. We hed a fair wind from the south'ard, an' by daylight nex' mornin' we was tied up to the Winterport steambo't wharf an' hed the gy-raffe in Cap'n Tobi's barn without a soul but Mis' Jackson a-knowin' of it. After bre'kfust we sallied forth upon our gay cay-reer, as folks doos in books consid'able more'n in real life, I've noticed, by tidy! an' run a-foul o' Sim Walker a-drivin' up the Hampden ro'd behind as cute a little gray hoss as ever you see on a Sunday mornin'.

" 'Good mornin', Cap'n Tobi', ' says he, pullin' up. 'I hope you're all well to home,' he says. 'Mis' Jackson nicely?' says Sim.

" 'Fust rate,' says the skipper.

" 'How's the boy?' says Sim, a-lookin' at me.

" 'He's a-settin' up,' said the skipper.

" 'Um-m-m-m!' says Sim. 'It's fine weather, ain't it?'

" 'Yes,' says Cap'n Tobi, knowin' by that that Sim's slack was about all paid out, 'it would be a great day,' says he, 'to trade hosses.'

" 'Not with your'n, cap'n,' says Sim, sort o' kind and fatherly. 'I wouldn't dicker this hoss for your'n; *though*,' he says, 'your'n is all complete in her way!'

" 'Sartain she is,' said the skipper. 'In her way, Sim, she doos beat all I ever see. But I like her too well, an' my wife doos, to let *her* go at any man's price,' says the skipper. 'I was wonderin',' says he,

## THE ROYAL TAR

'if you'd trade for somethin' good as the one you're a-drivin' of this mornin'.'

" 'There ain't a critter in the hull o' Knox an' Lincoln County can line up to this 'ere hoss,' says Sim.

" 'There prob'bly ain't but one,' says the skipper. 'an' he's in my barn.'

" 'Huh!' says Sim, sort of sniffin' in his nose. 'Be'n tradin' agin, hev' ye! Where'd you git him, an' what's he like?'

" 'Never you mind,' says the skipper. 'I gut him, an' there's more *to* him than there is to any hoss this side o' Nantucket Shoals. I'm thinkin',' he says, 'of takin' him up to the Bangor fair.'

" 'Why don't ye?' says Sim, so jealous he could hardly speak another word to us, an' he sicked up his gray hoss an' driv' along.

" 'Do ye think we ketched him, cap'n?' says I, after he left us.

" 'We baited him some, I guess,' says he. 'Now we'll wait a spell. That Bangor fair business'll nail him because he's expectin' to do somethin' special with that gray hoss o' his. Let him simmer. He'll show up agin before night.'

" That evenin' Sim Walker driv' into Cap'n Tobi's yard.

" 'Good evenin', Cap'n Tobi',' says he. 'How be ye all?'

" 'Puffeck,' says the skipper, who was settin' on the back porch in a willer rocker, an' didn't make no move to git up.

## THE MASTER BUILDERS

“ ‘How’s Mis’ Jackson?’ says Sim, makin’ as if to git out o’ his buggy.

“ ‘Nicely,’ says the skipper. ‘She’s out drivin’ that new hoss o’ mine I was a-tellin’ ye about.’

“ ‘Sho!’ says Sim. ‘I thought I see her at the parlor winder as I driv’ in.’

“ ‘No,’ says the skipper, sober’s c’d be, ‘that’s my wife’s fust cousin from Boston. She’s been to the Northport camp meetin’ an’s stoppin’ here for a spell.’

“ ‘Oh,’ says Sim, who wa’n’t strong for camp meetin’ers, an’ pullin’ in the leg he’d swung out o’ his buggy. ‘When’ll Mis’ Jackson be back?’ he says.

“ ‘I dunno,’ says the skipper. ‘A feller wanted to see that hoss, an’ I hed to let her take him down the ro’d a piece, bein’s I hed consid’able chorin’ to do. She may possibly trade an’ let the feller take him to Bangor himself.’

“ ‘See here, Cap’n Jackson,’ says Sim, settin’ up sudden in his buggy, ‘I tell you what! This hoss here is too good a hoss to trade off for an onsartainty. I’m a-goin’ to Bangor fair for blood,’ he says, ‘an’ I can’t afford to dicker onless I run up agin some kind of a sure thing,’ he says. ‘Sure things in hoss trades,’ says he, ‘is about as numerous as dollar bills in the contribution box.’

“ ‘I’ve found it so,’ says the skipper. ‘But you can’t hev’ this new one o’ mine on any dicker. I want cash, an’ he’s the best thunderin’ critter of his class.’

“ ‘He’s the only one *of* his class, cap’n,’ I put in.

“ ‘He’s the only one of his class the’ is in the whole State o’ Maine,’ says the skipper.

## THE ROYAL TAR

“ ‘Oh, he is, is he?’ says Sim, gittin’ red. ‘Well, this gray hoss here——’

“ ‘That old bloated plug o’ your’n ain’t a tag on the box that this one o’ mine come in, Sim,’ says the skipper. ‘If we was to meet ye in the ro’d you couldn’t see us for dust.’

“ ‘Oho!’ says Sim, a-droppin’ his reins agin; ‘that’s so, is it? What’s his mark?’

“ ‘I ain’t givin’ that away,’ says the skipper, ‘but he ain’t built for no grave diggin’ nor church-goin’ like that ol’ skate o’ yourn.’

“ ‘Ol’ skate!’ yells Sim, gettin’ puffedckly pupple in the face, ‘I’ll bate ye the hoss himself you hain’t got anything in *your* barn can beat him!’

“ ‘I’ll take ye!’ says the skipper, rising up quick. ‘When an’ where’ll we hev’ the race?’

“ ‘On the Hampden ro’d to-morrer evenin’,’ says Sim, shakin’ his whip at us, ‘an’ no quarter giv’ to nobody. I don’t care what you’ve gut in your barn. You trot him around this time to-morrer evenin’ an’ if he can beat this same ol’ skate o’ mine I’ll make ye a present of him an’ throw in the harness!’

“ ‘All right, Sim,’ says the skipper, yawnin’ as if he was gettin’ sleepy, ‘hev’ your own way. We’ll be there on them conditions, an’ the boy here’s a witness,’ an’ Sim drove off as mad as Time because Cap’n Tobi’ hed called his hoss an ol’ skate. It was a shame, too, for that gray hoss was one o’ the best you ever see to Winterport.”

“ ‘I wa’n’t never *to* Winterport,” remarked Mrs. Dix with a mouth full of pins.



## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"Humph!" was all the notice Mr. Pinnot accorded her.

"That night," he continued, "we hed that gy-raffe out on the Cross ro'd hitched to Cap'n Tobì's rainy-weather buggy. The critter was broke to harness puffed, an' driv' with a mouth as soft as a lady's, an' an easy hellum, specially with the wind. We didn't dare to put much more'n all plain sail on him, but when he let the reefs out o' them long legs o' his he sartain flew over the ro'd, an' we was so tickled we give him a rub down an' a big red apple when we gut him back to the barn for the night.

" 'The only thing worries me, Pinnot,' says Cap'n Tobì' jest as we turned in, 'is, is a gy-raffe a specie of hoss?'

" 'Sartain,' says I, 'he is. An' if he ain't Sim Walker can't wiggle, for he said he'd race with anything we hed in the barn, an' I'm a witness to it.'

"The nex' day Cap'n Tobì' sent me all around Frankfort an' Winterport an' Hampden an' Monroe an' the Marsh, to let folks know about the race, an' the stage drivers gut their instructions very pertikler, also. When evenin' come, there was a reg'lar circus-day crowd along the Hampden ro'd, from the waterin' trough at the stream just above Fred Atwood's store, down past the Commercial Hotel to the head o' the steambo't wharf. The course was from the stream down to Haley's, go about there an' make a home stretch back to the finish in front of the hotel.

"We hitched up the gy-raffe to the buggy. Cap'n Tobì' took an extry rein off his best double harness,

## THE ROYAL TAR

an' run it from the critter's starboard bit down through the martingale and then aft to the seat.

"'Git aboard,' says he, chucklin'. 'This craft needs a second officer,' says he. 'All you got to do is set still with that rein in your hand an' when I give the word take in all the slack the critter'll give ye. Them's the orders, an' that's all.'

"'Aye, aye, sir,' says I, an' then Mis' Jackson opened the barn doors an' let us out.

"Well, now, you can believe somethin' happened right away. The gy-raffe had a walk like a four-legged dude, an' when we came pacin' up the Hampden Ro'd the crowd looked as if it wanted to take to the woods, but couldn't for laughin'. When a teemin' community o' twenty-three hundred an' forty-seven souls hes anything at all, it hes it violent. That's the way we struck that crowd that day. They wa'n't less'n two or three hundred of 'em jammed right into the main street. They was sev'ral come clear from Bangor. I hain't never seen such a sight sence Squire Holster's funeral. When we driv' up the street an' Sim Walker see us, he looked like he hed a pain some-eres where he couldn't lay his hand on it.

"'What'n Time you got there?' he hollers.

"'Everything but the band an' the peanuts, Sim,' says the skipper. 'Air ye ready?'

"Everybody laughed, an' some of 'em told the skipper he hadn't ought to be a-drivin' with an overdraw check. An' then him an' me laughed, an' Sim Walker was so mad he'd a-raced us on his own hands an' knees.

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

“ ‘It ain’t reg’lar,’ he says. ‘I didn’t come here to race no Methodist steeple on stilts,’ he says, ‘an’ I’m bein’ made a cussed fool of. But I said I’d race, an’ I will race! Git that long-legged cocoanut nibbler about, if ye can, an’ we’ll see who’ll be a-swallerin’ whose dust,’ says he.

“ ‘We went up to the start, an’ put ’em about, an’ come down to the line on a rippin’ trot, with Sim Walker’s gray hoss on our starboard quarter.

“ ‘Go!’ hollered Henry Nolan, who was the judge, an’ Cap’n Tobl’ put the braid on the critter’s speckled hide an’ we went down the ro’d at better’n twenty knots. I must say my opinion of gy-raffes an’ all such ex-com-mu-ni-cated animiles improved consid’able in the nex’ few minutes. The crowd an’ the noise sort o’ rattled him, but he kep’ on goin’ at a tremendous gait, an’ we wa’n’t bothered none by his breakin’ because he didn’t know nothin’ but a trot, anyhow. He jest unkinked himself an’ went off like a gale o’ wind. The gray hoss was a goin’ some, too, but he didn’t lead us any more’n we led him, an’ when we went down the grade to Haley’s store it was as near an even thing as anyone in them parts could hev’ seen through the dust.

“ ‘Stand by to go about,’ sings out Cap’n Tobl’, as we come to the turn, an’ we swung around on a wheel an’ a half, an’ headed up the home stretch. Sim Walker was jest as keen as we was, though, an’ we hed the gray hoss on the port bow all the way up. I must say I never seen a hoss go cleaner nor steadier than he did.

## THE ROYAL TAR

"An' there he stuck. Cap'n Tobi' couldn't git another pound o' steam out o' the gy-raffe. We was a good deal like what Ed Pike over to Blue Hill used to say about womenfolks who'd reached the age of forty years old—not gainin' much an' not losin' much, but jest about holdin' our own.

"An' then we come up toward the finish, an' I could see Henry Nolan a-squintin' his eye along the line where the race was a-goin' to end.

"'It ain't no use, Pinnot,' says the skipper. 'I've basted the critter until I'm ashamed to think of lookin' him in the face when we unhitch, an' we ain't gainin' a mite. You couldn't jump out some way, could ye, an' lighten ship?'

"'I'd a sight rather heave in on this extry line you give me to tend,' says I. 'What's it for, anyhow?'

"'By tidy!' says the skipper, 'I forgot about that. Haul in!' he yells. 'Take in all the slack the critter'll give ye!'

"I throwed my heft onto the line, an' the slack began to come in. It stuck some, but the more I hauled in, the more the gy-raffe's long neck come down from where he'd be'n a-carryin' it, up high, an' went stickin' out in front like a reg'lar bowsprit. I gut his head down on a level with his ridgepole, an' jest then we shot over the line about a foot an' a half ahead of the gray hoss.

"'We gut it, Pinnot!' says Cap'n Tobi', backin' the gy-raffe's tops'ls an' goin' about. 'That flyin' jibboom of our'n jest turned the trick. Better cast off

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

that line now,' he says. 'What Sim Walker don't know about that won't hurt him.'

" 'You win, Cap'n Tobi,' hollered Henry Nolan as we driv' back to the line.

" 'Sartain,' says the skipper, kind of sassy, 'we win by a neck. Where's Sim Walker?'

" 'Here I be,' says Sim, comin' alongside an' lookin' dangerous, 'an' here's your gray hoss. You won the race, which it wa'n't fair, because I never said I'd race with no Barnum's circus. But I ain't a-kickin',' he says, 'for I can make a lot more out o' that there critter to the Bangor fair,' he says, 'than anyone'll ever make out o' trottin' hosses. So if you're satisfied I be, an' I'll thank ye to onhitch, prompt.'

"An' he could hardly git the gray out o' the shafts of his buggy, his hands was tremblin' so. So Cap'n Tobi' gut the gray hoss, and Sim Walker the gy-raffe, an' the crowd hed hed such a good show for nuthin' that there wa'n't no circus could git more'n a corp'ral's guard into no tent in Waldo County for the nex' three summers!"

"Hoss-racin' is wicked an' cruel," observed Mrs. Dix disapprovingly, but with an appreciative smile. "I bet his giraffe didn't do Mr. Walker no good."

"Mebbe not," replied Mr. Pinnot, turning back to his own part of the store to meet a fugitive customer, "an' mebbe so. I wouldn't want to commit myself to nuthin' definite. But Sim took the critter to the Bangor fair, an' they ain't never be'n no Walkers within a thousand miles of the Winterport town farm for the last forty years, so you can put two an' three together

## ***THE ROYAL TAR***

the way that suits ye best. Good mornin', Mis' oper," he added suavely to the newcomer, "there's postal for you inside some'eres. It's from your Miss Sarah out to Chercargo, an' she says she's well, the children's all brok' out with somethin'."

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE GREAT SUNDAY EXCURSION

**T**HE Rev. Henry Beecher Esdale called at the Yard two mornings later and asked for Harrison, who came out of the machine shop with damp and ruffled hair and his blue shirt sleeves rolled up.

"I suppose you know I'm Mr. Esdale," said the clergyman, "though we haven't met at church."

"There's more doing at my place of business than there is at yours," responded Harrison, "and especially to-day. What can I do for you?"

"I came to protest against the Sunday excursion I learn is going to be run into Oldport Harbor next Lord's Day on the railroad," said Mr. Esdale, gesturing with his head emphatically. "We have never had such a thing here and we ought not to begin such an iniquity when it can be avoided so easily."

"Just so," assented Harrison. "What about it? What do I have to do with it?"

"I am told the excursion is to be run to bring crowds of thoughtless pleasure seekers down to see your shipyard," replied the clergyman. "I come here to ask you to decline to receive them, and to frustrate this attempt to outrage the peace and good order

## ***THE GREAT SUNDAY EXCURSION***

of our village. As a citizen and as a minister of the Gospel, I appeal to you in the name of——”

“You’re in the wrong house, Mr. Esdale,” protested Harrison with an indulgent laugh. “Let’s see. Sit down there a minute.” While they spoke they had been walking slowly toward the offices, and now entered the main room. Harrison went to his desk and took up a telegram he had received that morning from Emily, and which he had thrown down unnoticed because of the more important work of finishing the cruiser :

Employees of Portsmouth Navy Yard are organizing Sunday excursion to visit Oldport and see cruiser, leaving here special train close of work Saturday evening, arriving early Sunday morning. Better be ready to let special direct into Yard. Particular request of Admiral Hatt.

E. TRENTIN.

Harrison read it over carefully. He wondered what Emily was doing at Portsmouth—and then saw that the telegram was dated elsewhere. He tried to connect it with their attempt to find coal and get it to Oldport, and gave it up on the sheer absurdity of it.

“How did you hear about the intentions of the godless, Mr. Esdale?” he asked.

“At the post office,” was the answer, “on the excellent authority of one of the most devoted workers in my vineyard.”

“Which parable, being interpreted,” remarked Harrison, “evidently turns the search light on our excellent but not always cautious friend, the Widow Dix.”



## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"I will remind you, sir," snapped the Rev. Henry Beecher Esdale, "to take notice that, as one who particularly respects and admires Mrs. Dix, I shall not allow further reference to her in this conversation!"

"Oh!" replied Harrison, letting his glance ramble over the neat little figure before him—its sparse thatch, its tilted and rather red nose, its small and well-weeded mustache over its pink trifle of a mouth, and all the rest of its proper little white-and-black proportions quivering with indignation. "Oh!" repeated Harrison, with renewed emphasis, "I didn't know the postmaster had a rival!"

"Mr. Harrison!" exclaimed the minister, bouncing out of his chair, "I——"

"Just plain Harrison," was the answer, "and don't take either yourself or me too seriously. You're not going to hurt anybody, and nobody's going to hurt you. I don't know anything about this Sunday-excursion business, and I wish I knew less. Anyhow, I couldn't stop it if I wanted to. You better let it come, and make the best of it. Have a special service for the visiting sinners, why don't you!"

"But they certainly would not come if you telegraphed them that, being Sunday, all work here would be stopped and the Yard closed to visitors."

"Very likely not," said Harrison. "But in trying to save a whole train load at once you're losing sight of me. You wouldn't ask me to wire 'em up a fib, would you?"

"Simply the plain truth," urged the minister. "The truth never hurts anybody."

## ***THE GREAT SUNDAY EXCURSION***

"It will hurt you all right when you hear it, though," replied Harrison. He was tired of it. A boy came in and said he was wanted in the chain foundry. Someone telephoned that Torpedo Boat Ten would be ready for dock trial next Wednesday. "The Yard won't be closed, and work won't be stopped next Sunday," he went on, "or any other Sunday for a long while. Next Sunday you won't be able to see us here unless you use a mighty rapid glass and catch us on the fly. Maybe you can guess the answer to my parable, now. Anyhow, if that crowd, or any other crowd comes down here in the pale and pearly dawn of the day after to-morrow, the entire three rings of this performance will be in full operation. I bet we'll draw better than you will. You'd be welcome yourself, if you joined the procession, sir."

"Perhaps I might suggest," said Mr. Esdale, managing to ignore Harrison's impudent ridicule of his profession, "that heretofore the management of this business has—whatever else it has done—respected sacred things."

"That's right," answered Harrison. "But I'm the business now—the whole business—and I don't!"

"And your finer nature——"

"My finer nature is just now working overtime on matters that wouldn't interest you. You know as much as I do about this Sunday-excursion business. I don't like it a bit better than you do, but on general principles I'm going to welcome the coming guest, as some of you fellows put it. It will advertise the town a lot more than your sermon will. Besides, Mrs.

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

Trentin's special request is that we entertain the whole bunch."

"Mrs. Trentin!" ejaculated the minister.

"The same," retorted Harrison.

"I don't believe it!" declared Mr. Esdale, bracing himself heroically.

"All right," said Harrison, capriciously tolerant for the time, "you needn't. Let's lay it to poor old Admiral Hatt. He wants it, anyhow."

"This is not the first time the Holy Day has been desecrated by ungodly and barbarous naval officers," remarked Mr. Esdale, making for the door.

"That's right," laughed Harrison. "We agree there, little man! Good-by. Too bad we can't all see alike, eh?"

"It is indeed calamitous!" exclaimed the minister fervently. Harrison went back to his work with a cynical memory lightening his tasks.

Emily did not write him of her movements in the city. He knew she would do all that anyone could do to help him coal the ship. That he was at the end of his own resources in this crowning emergency made him the more willing to trust much to hers; and, despite a terrible overshadowing dread that after all he was going to fail, he threw himself into the other and scarcely less vital work on the assumption that somehow Fate would not let it come to naught. He saw nothing of Whitehead excepting casual glimpses of his enemy pacing placidly up and down the porch of the Log Cottage, in a state of mind so evidently at

## **THE GREAT SUNDAY EXCURSION**

ease that Harrison read into it a sign of utmost danger to himself. Sometimes he could not make it seem real—when he looked over the lively scene of mere commercial activity about him—that behind it there was going on this game of life and death. But when, from the forgetfulness which came with the intensity of his labors in the deafening uproar of the toiling shops, he emerged into the quiet of the seabound shore, ever upon that neighboring place the steady figure strolled slowly back and forth, threatening him with the very persistence with which it ignored his doings.

On Saturday afternoon Emily wired him :

Special leaves 12.30 to-night. Arrives Oldport 9.30 Sunday morning. Will enter Yard on our own side track. Our matter looks more favorable, but very difficult. I return early in week.

E. TRENTIN.

He left orders with the night superintendent to see that the siding into the Yard was sufficiently clear, and to warn the day man who would relieve him at the head of the first morning shift. All these subordinates were Oldporters who replaced the clean sweep Harrison made after Mr. Whitehead's effort to bribe a dozen of the Yard crews.

About nine next morning he called up the train dispatcher and learned that the special was on time when last reported. Then he went on to the Yard and began the work of an exceptionally busy day—the last Sunday, all going well, the Twenty-Nine would be in Oldport water.

Just before half-past nine the train dispatcher, a

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

keen young fellow whom Harrison had befriended, telephoned:

"Have you heard anything about that Special?"

"Only what you tell me," replied Harrison. "No accident, is there?"

"Not that," said the dispatcher, "but all the stations up the line have been getting particular you-know-what for letting her by. Something wrong about the orders. Thought maybe you knew."

"Don't know anything except I'm too busy to care," replied Harrison. "You better let me know what you hear, though. Is the line clear through to my side track?"

"It's all clear," said the dispatcher. "She'll go right on down to the Yard. She's—hold the line a minute. There's a call——"

Harrison waited for half a long minute. There was a wailing shriek and a confused roaring coming to him out of the idle telephone. He pictured the receiver in the station dangling on the end of its silk-sheathed wire. Then——

"She's just gone by!" yelled the dispatcher. "You'll get her in a minute. I'll let you know later what the trouble was."

Harrison hung up his own receiver. As he went out into the Yard he heard the screech of a chime whistle. It did not blow the ordinary station signal. It delivered a series of double-barreled toots alternating with prolonged crescendo howls which rang through the quiet of the sunny summer morning and echoed back from the neighboring hillsides to the sea.

## **THE GREAT SUNDAY EXCURSION**

"That ought to hold the parson for a while," thought Harrison.

The Special poked her nose inside the company fence and came on slowly by the side track. It was the strangest excursion train Harrison had ever seen. There were ten day-passenger cars, but not a window in all of them was raised, not a head showed down the whole long line, not a flutter of muslin or the eager faces of laughing young folks were visible on the deserted platforms. As the train pulled up someone called his name, and, looking to the cab of the big mogul which had coursed down all the long miles with hardly a stop for what to it was breath, Harrison saw Emily standing with a grinning engineer at her elbow. Her hat was tied on with a dingy blue veil which did not in the least keep back the wisps of hair that had blown out of place and now hung over her smoky face, from where two soot-framed eyes gleamed triumphantly.

For a moment Harrison was too surprised to speak. He looked back along the silent train, from the sealed doors of which there yet came not the slightest sign of life, and back at the smudgy figure in the cab.

"I wonder how I look," said Emily, evidently not having thought of it for some time before. "Do I look as you look as if I looked?"

"You look like the—like the devil—or better!" answered Harrison. "If you rode down in that cab perhaps you can explain why Admiral Hatt or anybody else took the trouble to send us a train load of empties."

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

She climbed down, after a quiet word to the engineer. Harrison made no move to assist her.

"Empties!" she repeated. "Harrison, do you know what's in those cars?"

"I know what isn't in them, all right," he said, plainly annoyed to be kept guessing before other men.

"You are living proof of my success, then!" cried Emily. "Harrison, those cars are full of navy coal in sacks from the Portsmouth Yard!"

"No!" shouted Harrison, jumping clear of the ground.

"Yes!" responded Emily.

"How did you do it?"

"Luck, Admiral Hatt, the Navy Department, and a particularly silly young division superintendent," she replied, adding, with a dazzling glance at the cab, "and a specially nice fireman and engineer, to whom, by the way, we owe two hundred and fifty dollars apiece. I promised them that. The admiral will give them a new job, too. The conductor, poor man, he got left somewhere up the line. Just how we managed it I don't know. They could tell you better about that at Portsmouth. But I got an order to let us run express from the Junction, at four this morning, straight into Oldport, and though they tried to stop us every now and then they couldn't do it. We had just hired so many passenger cars for a Sunday excursion—we didn't say whether we were to haul people or coal. Then it was Sunday, you see, and most of the small stations were shut. That conductor

## ***THE GREAT SUNDAY EXCURSION***

never got a written order to stop, and he did have instructions to run through with only that one delay at the Junction. As soon as we passed there we were practically safe. The coal was loaded after dark at the navy yard, in sacks. It was a dreadful job, and we couldn't get in more than half enough. But we can go to sea, they say, with what we have here, and the cruiser is to join the fleet at once. It's at Portland now. Can't we have her coaled to-day?"

"Not without knocking off the crews in the shops," said Harrison; "and if we knock off the men there we shall delay other things. If we had the men to coal and provision her, we could get under way to-morrow morning early—maybe before midnight."

"Get the men, then!" insisted Emily. "Go up into the town. It's Sunday, and everybody is idle. Call for volunteers——"

The loud ringing of the telephone bell in the offices interrupted them. Harrison went in and then came back, running.

"That station agent telephoned," he said, very excitedly. "They've got it on the wire—the dispatchers have. They pass these things along, of course. A wireless message from Washington from somewhere up East says they have fired on our scouts—yesterday they did that. A big squadron is coming onto the coast. It drove in our scouts, you see, and the war—why, it's begun! It's on! The Atlantic Fleet is at Portland and will go out to meet 'em. That's where we want to be. Where are we going to get our pow-



## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

der and everything—our small-arm ammunition? What about our navy crew? All we've got here are trial trippers."

"I forgot to tell you," responded Emily. "There wasn't time before. The navy crew will come down in another special arriving this evening, and bringing a second train load of ammunition, enough, they promised me, to last you until you could get out to the fleet. . Nobody can prevent that. That's different from coal combines. I told them everything, and they admit they oughtn't to have left us so long without a guard. So you go ahead and be ready. Go up into the town, first, and call for stores and men."

"I'm off," replied Harrison. "You look after your train men. I won't have much trouble getting volunteers now if——"

He had half turned to start away, when he came back to her.

"Don't appear to look that way," he said, "until you get a better chance. After I go you can take the glasses in the offices and see for yourself better. But Whitehead is up there at the Log Cottage watching us. He'll hear the other news, too, soon. You must be careful. He'll cut the ship out if he can, the minute he knows what's been done. He'll try to cut us out, too, I suppose. Be careful how you go around alone just now. Don't go around at all. That'll be better."

"Are you afraid of him?"

"I'm afraid he'll hurt you," said Harrison. "You've

## **THE GREAT SUNDAY EXCURSION**

done it, and he'll want to punish you. I don't want you to suffer for what you've done for me."

"Not for you, Harrison," she answered, more alarmed at his tone of familiar confidence than by his warnings regarding Mr. Whitehead. "I did it for the Yard—for both—for all of us."

"I suppose you did, after all," he assented. She saw the bitter side of him appear, as ever, on provocation. "It's always the Yard for you, and not the man who's giving his life to make it go."

She dared not engage him in so perilous an argument just then.

"You must learn patience," she said gently. "After these things are done there will be more time for personal obligations. We must simply keep working and let ourselves wait."

She was shocked with shame to see the smile which came over his strained and tired face; but, though she knew he had inferred a meaning she had not intended to convey, she risked nothing further and let him have his mind's way, while she went hers.

"I'm going to wash my face, now," she said to the railroad engineer, who had been standing by for his orders. "Not all that navy coal is in the cars!"

With that light word she started toward home, too ill at ease to give another thought to the men who watched her every movement from their stations in the Log Cottage. Not the peril they were in, or the danger to the ship, or the thrill of the coming shock of a terrifying war were in her mind, but the pale and hungering features of the man she was playing re-

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

lently to the end lit up and flashed with that great glow of yearning passion inspired by her craftily chosen words; his look and the odious knowledge that that within him which pursued her had responded to her lure!

## CHAPTER XVII

### AN UNDELIVERED SERMON

**H**ARRISON walked rapidly toward the town. As he turned into the long stretch of wide street which led through the village, he was struck by the contrast between the silence which he was approaching and the tense activity he had left behind. Even the porch of Meguire's store was vacant. One man and a dog slumbered on the semicircle of weedy grass before Hunting's Hotel. From under the long row of horse sheds by the church came now and then the ringing stamp of some irritated animal impatiently waiting on the devotions of its master's family. A group of busy poultry gossiped over their pickings in undisturbed enjoyment of the Sabbath quiet of the street. The shrill squall of a baby in a near-by house was hushed with significant suddenness, only to give place to an eloquent clatter of pots and pans in another house across the way. There was a general smell of Sunday cooking, new-cut grass, and summer morning. As Harrison neared the post office the door was thrown open and Mr. Pinnot came out.

"Mis' Dix is inside," he said breathlessly. "They called her, an' I had her come over an' open up. She's got a message. War's declared, an' the furrin fleet's

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

some'eres off Mon'egan now. They've driv' in our torpedo bo'ts an' sunk some, it says!"

"I know that already," replied Harrison, "and I'm after volunteers to help get the cruiser to sea some way. There's a navy crew coming down this evening. Before they get here I want to provision her and bunker a thousand tons of coal that came down in the night. I want every man in the village to help."

"Aye, aye, sir!" responded the postmaster. He took a hitch at the belt of his trousers, ejected his quid with an explosive energy which sent it hurtling halfway across the street in exact line with the head of a particularly nervous Plymouth Rock rooster, and touched his hat brim with a firm forefinger.

"By thunderin' tidy, but here's one for ye!" he exclaimed. "What's wanted, Cap'n Harrison, sir?"

"You take charge of getting provisions down to the yard," responded Harrison. He was never given a certain coveted opportunity to make the old man do it over again, salute and all. "I'll take all of Meguire's heavy stock—you know what. Use your own judgment, only get the stuff there. That will take about half the men in the village. I want all the rest, especially the young ones, to come down and coal the ship. They'll do it, I suppose?"

"They'll hev' to," declared Mr. Pinnot briefly. "They're mostly to church, I guess."

"That's all right," said Harrison. "Come with me."

"Mis' Dix," began Mr. Pinnot, looking yearningly back toward the post office, "she——"

## **AN UNDELIVERED SERMON**

"She'll shift for herself, don't you worry," interrupted Harrison. "You come with me."

"I ain't in reg'lar official rig," urged the postmaster, still reluctant. "It wouldn't take me a minute to——"

But Harrison was already away, and he was forced to follow. They went straight down to where the little church sat behind its tiny yard of not overprosperous, old-fashioned flower beds parted by a hubbly gravel walk.

"Guess you hain't be'n to church as a reg'lar Sunday habit," remarked Mr. Pinnot, "by the way you're a-goin' at it this partikler Sabbath mornin.' Elder Esdale's prob'ly jest gut well under way."

"You stick to me," responded Harrison. He sprang up the steps to the church door. The Reverend Henry Beecher Esdale was speaking:

"It is high time this people protested in no uncertain terms against the persistent, wanton, and unnecessary desecration of the Sabbath day by such a Godless corporation as menaces the peace and happiness of this village by its presence here."

Peeping through the crack of the door for a moment to get the lay of the land within, Harrison saw that this was a sample of the entire morning's discourse, and that, in the few minutes he had been speaking, the minister had already, by the exceedingly uneasy appearance of his congregation, got an embarrassing local question by the wrong end. Just as the clergyman was drawing breath for another flight, Harrison, followed closely by Mr. Pinnot, swung open the church door and went striding up the aisle.

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"One moment, Mr. Esdale!" he called, and before another word could be spoken by anyone he was in front of the altar and had faced the congregation. Everybody but himself remembered that he had never before been seen in that or any other church. His hat was still on his head. Mr. Pinnot, less absorbed by the movement of events, and somewhat more scientifically church-broken, sank uncovered into one of the front pews.

"It's a pity to interrupt this meeting, my friends," said Harrison, "and especially so as it happens that I am the biggest part of that same Godless corporation which doesn't always close on Sunday, for one thing, and for another has given high-paid employment to some member of practically every family in this village, and is the best piece of taxable property in town, not omitting this church and the three-dollar poll tax paid by our eminent, distinguished, and ambitious friend now in my immediate rear."

"Mr. Harrison!" exclaimed the horrified minister, finding his voice in the provocation of that scandal, "everybody in this town who knows anything knows that I pay taxes on an Ideal Grand parlor organ and one excellent sorrel mare."

"Agreed," replied Harrison. "That's more than I do. What I came in here to say was, that war has been declared, and the enemy's fleet is not only right off this coast, but has already destroyed some of our smaller ships. The country needs every vessel it can muster. I want to send our new cruiser out to-night to join the fleet, and to do that I've got to have the

## AN UNDELIVERED SERMON

help of every man, woman, and child in this village. I want——”

“We decline to listen to such an infamous proposal!” interrupted the minister, thumping his desk vehemently. “To the abuse of the Lord’s Day you are adding the evil of armed strife. We shall not participate in——”

“Whoa!” roared a vast old voice. Mr. Pinnot had spoken. He was standing on the seat of one of the fore pews, facing the congregation. He seemed to mind neither the absence of Mrs. Dix nor the lack of official garb. In his excitement he, too, had restored his hat to his head.

“Elder Esdale,” he began, without looking back at the preacher, “this ain’t your sort of a trick. You’re drorin’ too much to navergate in these waters! Yes, sir, you be! This congregation knows as well as I do that you ain’t a-representin’ of the sentiments of this meetin’, by all-thunderin’ tidy! Cap’n Harrison wants volunteers, an’ he wants ’em quick. From the mast-head here I make out Cap’n Sam Nowell, an’ Cap’n Henry Haines, an’ Cap’n Pip Meguire, an’ Cap’n Iry Mavis, an’ other ancient an’ hon’able mariners who, like myself, ain’t *jest* as young as we was when old Marster Trentin called for volunteers in this same church on a Sunday mornin’ a spell ago, in ’61, but we ain’t paid out all our cable yit—er—hev we, boys?”

“Cap’n Pinnot,” responded Judge Nowell, rising from his crowded pew, “all the old fellows second that motion. And,” he added, looking about him with a



## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

glittering eye, "the young ones will if they know what's good for them!"

"That's the talk!" cried Harrison, leaping up by Mr. Pinnot's side. "I want every young and able-bodied man to go at once to the Yard and help bunker a train load of coal that just came in. It will be the hardest kind of work, as you all know, and you can stop on the way down, if you want to, and change your clothes or swap with someone else for old ones. The company will serve coffee along about noon, but you won't get much of anything else. One man will be just as good as another, and no better, and you'll all be treated like slaves till it's done. If anyone wants to pull out now's his time to do it. I don't want any dead ones on my hands after we get going. How about it?"

Not a soul in the church moved out of his place. Mr. Esdale bestirred himself, a hopeful smile coming in his flushed face. Suddenly Mr. Pinnot had an inspiration.

"When do we want 'em?" he demanded. "You hain't told 'em, an' they're waitin' for orders."

"Right now," said Harrison.

"All right, boys," shouted the astute postmaster, "all that's a-goin', git!"

There was a rush and a yell. They had been waiting for the word, and were out and away. Some unbuttoned their coats and wriggled out of them, as they ran, without stopping, toward the Yard. Their shouts sounded through the town.

"Now, then," said Harrison, "I want every other man to consider himself under Cap'n Pinnot's orders,

## ***AN UNDELIVERED SERMON***

and help move provisions from the village to the Yard. I'll take the whole of your heavy stock, Cap'n Meguire, if you'll sell it, for half cash, balance in thirty days—this whole crowd is a witness to the terms."

"It's yours, Cap'n Harrison," shouted Pip Meguire above the confusion of the still departing volunteers, "an' it shouldn't cost ye a cent if my folks wa'n't sickly an' taxes due nex' month."

"Don't be afraid of that," replied Harrison, "and you shall have your own price. Now, then, Cap'n Pinnot, go ahead and——"

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" called an agitated voice. Near the rear seats there was a strange mêlée, people being pushed here and there, women protesting, men giving orders, somebody trying hard to explain things and not accomplishing much. Then a man extricated himself and dashed out of the press and down the church steps into the gravel path, and so on out to the street. Harrison saw two heavy black coat tails flying.

"It's Pip Meguire, sir," said Cap'n Pinnot. "He's left his store key to home in his other pants. What'n time's that woman a-trying to do on that chair there!"

A woman had climbed to a chair in the choir loft and was waving a hymn book in an effort to attract attention.

"Whoa!" ordered Cap'n Pinnot again. "Mis' Pip Meguire hes the floor—mebbe I should say the second floor. Go on, Mis' Meguire."

"I was only a-goin' to ask," said Mrs. Meguire, "what Cap'n Harrison hes for women folks in this

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

village to do? As president of the Rebecca Miller branch of the Willin' Workers' Society, an' sopranner leader o' this choir, I——"

"Good!" called Harrison in response. "I want every woman in this church to hurry home and hustle out every other man in town and send them all down to work. After that you can make us some coffee, of course. That's all, and if you do it, it's enough."

While the others were hastening out, Mr. Pinnot turned to Harrison.

"You've forgotten Elder Esdale, sir," he said.

"No I haven't," was the answer. "I'm saving him till the last!"

The preacher, overcome by the rapid progress of affairs so greatly beyond his control, was leaning on his desk in visible bewilderment. Harrison went up to him.

"Supposing you come with me, sir," he remarked suavely.

"I shall have nothing to do with such a thoughtless business," replied Mr. Esdale firmly. "My people have had their heads turned by your fatuous folly."

"Fatuous folly is good," laughed Harrison, with the indulgent good-nature of the man who is satisfied with what he has to do. "Come along with me and I'll show you some more of it."

"Never!" declared Mr. Esdale, shutting his useless hymn book with a loud crack.

"Tut!" persisted Harrison. "The temporal powers are in command to-day, remember. Come along quietly now"—he changed his tone unexpect-

## ***AN UNDELIVERED SERMON***

edly and made a step forward—"unless you want to be waltzed through Oldport Harbor by the nape of your neck!"

"I yield because, as a man of peace, I have to submit to your brutal assaults," replied the clergyman. He seemed to be on the verge of tears. Then he gathered himself dramatically and came from behind the desk.

"Do your worst, desecrator!" he said.

"Well done," responded Harrison. "Come along with me. Pinnot, you get to work on those supplies, now, lively."

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered the postmaster. "Jest as soon as Pip Meguire locates his other pants. That's what comes o' the luxuries o' these 'ere degenerate days, eh, Elder Esdale? A man ought to hev to keep all his pussonal property in four pockets, I say."

The minister lifted his small head a little higher, but maintained a martyred silence in the face of this implied taunt. When they reached the street Mr. Pinnot saluted once more.

"Very good, sir!" said he, heading for Meguire's store, where a crowd of his townsmen were awaiting impatiently the arrival of the half-crazed proprietor, still in the mazes of his labyrinthian wardrobe.

Harrison and Mr. Esdale proceeded in silence to the Yard. Already the company's shifter had moved the coal cars down to the pier where the long red hull of the Twenty-Nine lay tied. A number of the younger men were standing around waiting for orders. Someone had opened the doors of the cars, so that the sacks of coal, stowed in the aisles and between the seats,

## THE MASTER BUILDERS

could be seen. From every corner of the Yard came the thrash and roar of hurrying machinery. Hundreds of men darted here and there about the outward parts of the cruiser herself. She looked like a gigantic ant-hill of blood-stained steel. The figure on the porch of the Log Cottage had disappeared, but in the gable window Harrison's experienced eye could see the watchman still sitting there with his glass in place, noting everything. Somewhere there on that hilltop, he knew, the final plot was being made against him.

"Doesn't it wake you up a little, sir?" he asked of the clergyman by his side.

"It is very—very interesting," admitted Mr. Esdale, who had been taking in a great deal with his snapping little eyes. "It is *all* of that, I should say," he added. "Did you manage to get all that coal down here as Sunday excursionists? What—" he looked at Harrison doubtfully, "what disposition do you propose to make of me, if I may ask so much?"

"See that train?" responded Harrison. "Every pound of that coal has got to be taken out of the cars, lugged over the side of the cruiser on the backs of these men, and stowed away in the bunkers. Coaling ship in the ordinary way is hard enough. This is just exactly three times as hard, and you've got a green crew. But we've put the cars as near the ship as we can get them, and these Oldport boys have all been to sea enough to know what not to do, anyhow. I can show them how in ten minutes. Then I'm going up to the machine shop, and after that I'm going over her engines and see what shape they're in. That means

## ***AN UNDELIVERED SERMON***

I shan't be here on this coaling job again unless I'm called by an emergency."

"And I?" asked the minister, again eying Harrison, but with less trouble in his manner.

"I'm going to leave you in charge," said Harrison. "You're going to boss this whole crew. They know you, and they like you more than you may think they do. You only need to see that nobody gets in anybody else's way, and that each man works to the best possible advantage. Just simply keep coal going into her all the time—that isn't so easy as it looks from here, either. Now I'll show you."

He went rapidly over the system, sure of the success of the very boldness of his plan, which was part plan and part a certain revenge and resentment he felt for men of Mr. Esdale's faithful temper. More men came in. Before the new boss was ready they were arriving by tens, all eager to work.

"Now, then," said Harrison finally, "you're off. Show them no mercy, don't let anybody talk back to you, and the minute a man shows he's going bad order him off for an hour's rest. You can detach twenty men at a time for coffee every now and then. They'll need it, too. Don't be afraid of them. It's a pity you've forgotten how to swear."

"Why—why," stammered the somewhat bewildered clergyman, "I—I—hope I have!"

"Make a try at it," urged Harrison, a little tauntingly. "It might come back to you!" Then he faced the little clergyman and looked close into his eyes. "Don't you make any breaks, now!" he said, in that

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

murmuring growl of a tone which transformed him instantly into what every man who worked for him feared with all his might. "You've got your orders! Obey them to the letter! See? You understand?"

"I—I," attempted Mr. Esdale. "I think—well," then he, too, saluted as he had seen Mr. Pinnot do. "Aye, aye, sir!" he said. He seemed quite breathless.

Harrison acknowledged the salute gravely and started for the shops. Even as he walked across the exposed space of the open Yard, where a bullet from the Log Cottage could so easily have ended him with no one but the marksman wiser for the shot, he was deep in the hundred other things yet needful to the commissioning of the Twenty-Nine.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE STRIKE

**A**T the offices, where he stopped for a moment on his way to the machine shops, Harrison found a brief note from Emily telling him that she had gone home to make peace with her family and remove the evidences of her wild night journey.

"The shop foreman's be'n in here looking for you, sir," said the head bookkeeper. "There was a telephone call for him and he came in and went into the booth and answered it. Right afterwards, about ten minutes ago, he was asking for you in a hurry."

"That means trouble," said Harrison, with the quick comprehension of high mental excitement. "Who telephoned him—do you know?"

"I couldn't say for certain," replied the head bookkeeper cautiously, "but if I was to guess I should say it was Whitehead or some of his folks."

Harrison went out to the shops. The instant he entered them he knew there was trouble, indeed. Several of the machines nearest him had shut down and others were plainly preparing to do so. The foreman came over to him.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, "but I'll have to shut down the shop."



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"How's that?" demanded Harrison sharply.

"The unions won't allow these amateur coal-heavers of yours to work on a government job," answered the foreman. "Orders were wired down for every man to lay off till the Central in the city can make an investigation. I was asked if it was true that you had nonunion men on the cruiser who weren't a regular enlisted crew, and of course I had to say you did."

"Of course you didn't!" retorted Harrison. "They're only coaling and provisioning—there's no skilled labor."

"You'll have to show that to the Central later," declared the foreman regretfully. "My order was to go out with every union man in the Yard, and stay out till the Central could take action. So we've got to go."

"You wouldn't have to go out if your order was faked, would you?" asked Harrison.

"Why, no," was the answer. "But how are we going to prove that?"

Harrison had anticipated that answering question even as he put his own. How could anything be proved in a few hours with only a bought-up telegraph line between Oldport and the world?

"So," he went on, ignoring useless objectioning, "even if I knock off the nonunion men I have taken on in this emergency, when every decent American should be pulling for his country for all he's worth, you wouldn't return to work?"

"We couldn't," replied the foreman.

"Speaking about trusts," said Harrison to himself

## **THE STRIKE**

between the terrible gusts of rage which came bursting up out of him for utterance just then, "there's nothing the matter with the labor trust, anyway!" It wasn't to be a bullet just yet, then. Whitehead was playing him a while before the finish. That was a hopeful sign—the reluctance of his enemy to use the extreme means which might have been invoked as easily as a quick man's hand could have pressed a rifle trigger. Again, in the strained, unnatural clarity of his mind, Harrison saw his way through the darkness to a spot of light, and made straight for it.

"Shut down," he directed, and waited for the great steel-sided, sky-lit structure to become quiet. The men crowded toward the end where he stood. He sprang up to the seat of a neighboring chair, remembering as he did so what a different scene had been before him in the church that morning.

"I'll give double time to every man who'll stand by me on this job till midnight to-night!" he shouted. "Those of you who want it move to the rear!"

No one moved. Hoping hard in his own favor, he struck again.

"I'll give double time and a half, if that's what's the matter," he added. Some of the men began talking loudly.

"You can't do it, and you know it!" yelled the foreman to the crowd. "It's orders, and that's all there is to it!"

"It's faked orders, I tell you!" cried Harrison. "It's faked, faked, faked! Yes, it is! They're simply trying to stop the ship from going out, that's all."

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"Go on out now," repeated the foreman. "Go on out now, lively!—I'm sorry, Mr. Harrison," he said, as his employer got down from the chair, "but I have to think of my bread and butter before I do of yours."

"I'm not supposed to think of my own at all," responded Harrison. He could have throttled the life out of the man before him and eased his mind from the anger and defeat which was in it. "Take all your traps out with you, Fletcher," he continued, "you'll never be allowed inside the fence again!"

"Mr. Harrison," protested the foreman, "I've be'n head of this shop for twenty-two years, and my five children are being raised and schooled on what this company's paid out to me!"

"Sure!" replied Harrison. "That's why you're done now. You're all done—you and your children and your children's children, so far as this Yard is concerned. I'm as strong a man on union labor as you are, and you know it. I believe in it, and I unionized this business myself at a cost of a thousand dollars a month to the concern, and all that difference went into your pockets—into you men's pockets, and onto the backs of your wives and into the stomachs of your kids. Now look at what I get for it! This sort of unionism isn't in my line—the kind that makes a cow of a man! You could have prevented this if you'd have held out against it. Now you get out before I pitch you out, you damned, weak-kneed fool! I'm busy and you're in the way."

## **THE STRIKE**

The men were trooping through the Yard in a disordered and argumentative procession.

"Your own men won't support you in it," continued Harrison, actually loath to let the foreman go with so little punishment. "I'm going to take the most of them back, later; but the next time you visit this Yard you won't get an inch farther than the gate, and if you do I'll have you locked up in two minutes. Now, you clear out and you stay out—stay out, you——"

Harrison's anger cooled a little under the pressure of circumstances which had once more been turned against him. Again the fact of Whitehead's failure to take extreme measures, even at this last hour of the battle, occurred to him. He thought it was suggested by the faces of many of the men as they poured out past him. He ran outside and shouted to as many as could hear him.

"At four this afternoon," he said, "I shall have something to say to you. As many of you as want to hear it, come back at that time and wait outside the gate. I'll make it worth your while, and it won't be anything against your union rules, either—not a bit against union rules—remember that, all of you."

Without waiting for anything like a response, Harrison returned and looked into the deserted shops. The sight and the meaning of it—the significant expression of Whitehead's multiform power which it implied—were unbearable to him in that state of his mind, and he went out again abruptly, trying to hold

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

himself up on the thought that he still had cards to play, and possibly the trump! All would depend on the working out of the plan he intended disclosing to the strikers in the afternoon. At all events, his invitation would keep them quiet, and render them less open to influence from the other side. He well knew what the enemy might do with that whole idle crew incited to violent outbreak.

A number of belated men hastened past him on their way out. Among the last was one who stopped and, after making sure that no one was in hearing, said to Harrison:

"It's a dirty trick, sir, and there's hardly one of us but knows it. We're sorry for you, even if they have got their rings in our noses."

"Thanks," said Harrison, more cordially than was his habit among the men. "That helps, anyway. See here," he added irrelevantly, "have you ever been to sea?"

"Not before the mast—no, sir," said the man. "But I've worked all over a steamer. I'm a machine man, sir."

"I suppose the most of you men can do that trick," remarked Harrison.

"Nine tenths of us, sir," was the confident answer. "If the strike goes on long, most of us'll enlist in the navy."

"What's your name?" asked Harrison quickly.

"Hatch, sir," said the man.

Harrison wrote it in his notebook and looked up to send the man away, when his eyes came in line with

## ***THE STRIKE***

the Log Cottage once more and he saw that two men were standing on the porch now, and that one of them was regarding him and his companion through a glass. "Another name on their blacklist," he thought, as he slipped his own book into his pocket.

For the first time he decided not to play too freely with the dangers that surrounded them, and picked his way back to the offices in the protection of intervening buildings. Through the main gate and down the paved roadway of the Yard an unbroken stream of stores and provisions was moving toward the water front—cracker boxes, flour, tarpaulins, deck paints, brass polish, canned meats, mixed groceries, and oilskins—Pip Meguire's whole stock flowed steadily out to sea under the impetus of Mr. Pinnot's skilled direction. Squads of sweating young men scrambling about the impromptu coffeehouse established by the patriotic and likewise enterprising proprietor of Hunting's Hotel, seemed to indicate that regular work was going on at the coaling of the ship. Harrison went inside to study out the new situation and to estimate on the actual condition of the cruiser. Besides, he knew that Mr. Whitehead's hand held many another high play, and there was that to be considered—what the other side would do and why they were working solely for delay without actually blocking the departure of the ship? From it all he figured thus: That Whitehead, having kept exact account of the work of the Yard, had evidently seen that the cruiser could be gotten under way the moment she was coaled and stored, and was merely clearing the field to enable

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

himself to dash in and cut her out when Harrison's volunteers had completed their labors for him. With that fixed in his mind, Harrison got down to his work.

First he had Mrs. Dix send a decoy telegram to the Portsmouth Navy Yard:

Where is navy crew? When does it arrive, and how?

HARRISON.

He believed that though the message would be repeated to the enemy it would be sent on to its destination without delay, acting at once as a hint to the navy yard and as a blind to Whitehead, who must have already received information that a crew was to be sent. If the message were repeated to Whitehead, as seemed sure, Harrison could work out his own plan in comparative safety.

He called for all the construction records of the Cruiser Twenty-Nine, and determined to the last item exactly what she needed. This inventory satisfied his question, "Could she go to sea as she is now if she had to?" Shut in with his work, he did not know that noon had come and gone until a boy sent by Mrs. Dix brought him a reply to his telegram:

Crew will reach you before midnight by special train under command of Lieutenant Culver. Turn ship over to him when ready to get under way. He will take her out to join the fleet. Detail comprises fifty men with arms and one officer. You will supply entire mechanical and navigating force, and one experienced pilot, as far as Portland only.

HATT, Commandant.

## ***THE STRIKE***

Harrison went over this message several times before putting it down, and read it over the telephone to Emily.

"What do you make of it?" she asked. "Do you think it is genuine?"

"Perfectly genuine," he said, "and perfectly satisfactory to me. Whitehead has it—a copy of it, you see, or the substance of it in cipher, more likely, and he will take it as his cue for cutting out the ship. All we've got to do is get there first."

"Get where first?" asked Emily. "Do what?"

"Cut her out ourselves," declared Harrison, laughing at the simplicity of his own plot. "Get her away before either Whitehead or the navy-yard folks get around. Understand? She'll do for sixty days or so without the extra parts I wanted to fit her with, and whip her weight in foreigners into the bargain. We couldn't put up much of a fight with her with this Old-port crew aboard, but we'll just give her a little trial trip this evening that will make things hum—you see?"

Still taking care to keep out of range of the Log Cottage, Harrison went across the Yard to the main gate, where, to his gratification, he found several hundred men waiting to see what he had to say. He climbed upon a wooden horse which had been left there by the carpenters and steadied himself against the palings of the high red fence. He knew that if his call for this gathering had been communicated to the Log Cottage his life would be worth but little if he made that target of himself for long.



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE REGENERATION OF A SAINT

I SIMPLY want to say to you men," began Harrison, "that as you are no longer in the employ of this company, I speak to you wholly as unemployed American citizens. This cruiser of ours is ready for sea, and goes as soon as we can get a crew to join the fleet. You've worked on her, and you know the whole world is afraid of her and wonders what she is going to do in a fight. I want her to show. I want two hundred volunteers to enlist, not in the service of this company, but in the service of the United States Navy, and go aboard at once for a three-months' tour of duty, and longer if you like. You know the country needs you. What I am asking is, Will you men come to her aid?"

There was a clamor of confusion as he paused. He remembered an incident of the morning in the church and hastened to say:

"It's easier for me to talk to all of you than it is for all of you to talk to me. All of you who will stand by the country and give her a ship to help fight her battles with—you just pass through the gateway into the Yard and be examined. Remember, once you enter that gate you can't go out of it—not even to see your

## ***THE REGENERATION OF A SAINT***

families. You must stay inside until the ship goes out and you go with her. But if any men don't feel that they can leave home on short notice, let them stand by until we get her to Portland, where they'll be paid for their time and sent back home by rail. It will give you a chance to see the fleet, and maybe the battle, even if some of you can't afford to leave your families just now. Now all those who will go on those terms, pass in lively."

There was an instant of hesitation. The thing had come so suddenly and meant so much. Then Harrison's alluring references to what was uppermost in the minds of every man of them accomplished their work. The crowd, gathering itself into as small a compass as it could manage, jammed through the gate. One or two tried to cheer, and some of the younger lads laughed nervously aloud. Harrison leaped down and ran in after them.

"Go right on and line up in front of the machine shop on the land side of it!" he shouted, wishing to conceal the movement from the watchers on the hill.

"Hip, hip, hip—!" cried a young fellow with a high, reedy voice. The resulting "Hurrah!" shook half the glass in Oldport. It was an indiscretion, but Harrison did not try to check enthusiasm then. It was exactly what the men would need to carry them through the balance of the day.

"So far, so good," he remarked. "But about now look out for spies and treachery." He kept that in mind when he selected his men, and even those who appeared ineligible as he ran over them rapidly were

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

retained in some capacity rather than let any out into the town again. The gate was closed and locked.

"Hatch," he said to the man who first had spoken to him after the strike, "step out of line. Take these men over to the offices, keeping in rear of the main buildings as much as possible so as not to attract too much attention from outside the Yard. Have their names listed, and then return them to the machine shops and make them as comfortable as possible until they are wanted. Lunch will be served in about an hour. The head bookkeeper will send over writing material so that anyone who wants to can write a note to his folks explaining his absence and telling them that he'll be back from Portland, if that's what he wants to do. Tell them not to worry. It isn't fighting we are after now, but just a little trial trip to see what the old ship is going to do with herself."

Fifty men had been told off one at a time as Harrison had gone through the lot. These he held in the shadow of the shops when the others marched away. Every one of them was either a straight ex-navy or naval-reserve man. Before the main body had returned from the offices Harrison had these fifty armed and ammunitioned from the storehouse stock of service rifles which had been sent down some weeks before for the cruiser. With full cartridge belts hidden under their blouses they were posted about the Yard with orders to shoot anyone who tried coming in or going out, friend or enemy, without making a good account of himself or waiting to hear from the offices. He detailed a bookkeeper to make the rounds of the posts

## ***THE REGENERATION OF A SAINT***

on his bicycle. And then he ran plump into Mr. Pinnot, sitting flabbily on a biscuit box and fanning himself with his hat.

"All gone, sir," reported the postmaster, with a feeble but inspiring smile. "There ain't enough left of Pip Meguire's stock to save a mouse from nervous prostration." Then he laughed outright. "But you ought to see Elder Esdale a-coalin' ship, by tidy!" he exclaimed.

Harrison went down through the Yard. As he neared the piers he heard a great sound, as of men singing. It was something too familiar to be recognized in so strange a place.

He came around the corner of a storehouse right upon an unforgettable scene. From the cars, along the piers, and across the planks into the high sides of the ship, there crawled a painful, struggling line of sweltering men, tugging and lugging at the sacks of coal, from which there arose a fine and choking dust that had settled heavily on everything in those parts and rendered it a smutty, brownish black. And above the toilers, more smudgy and forbidding than them all, a little man sat straddling the projecting body of an eight-inch broadside rifle, to which he clung with one hand while with the other he alternately beat time and directed the movements of the horrible crew below him. He did not see Harrison. His hat, his collar, and his coat were missing. In his blackened face his small eyes danced with a steady fervor.

"Now, boys!" he shouted hoarsely, with a mandatory gesture, "only half a car more and the coal is

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

all in. Bear a hand there, Jenkins—that's it! Only the fresh ones now. Drop back there, Pressey, you're done. All ready now—last half, last car, last trip, last verse, and one, two, three, four—sing!”

Upon which the entire disreputable gang broke out with a ringing repetition of the song which had come to the listeners' ears:

“Onward, Christian soldiers,  
Marching as to war!”

Harrison's impulse to laugh was prevented by something his stolid imagination was totally unable to explain.

“By George! By George!” was all he found he could say. “The little thoroughbred!” he added a moment later, and waited until the grand old hymn was finished and with it the coaling of the ship.

They took Henry Beecher Esdale—that crowd of smutty farmers—and lugged him on their dusty shoulders to the company offices and deposited him in a very much surprised and embarrassed heap in Harrison's big leather chair which was offered by Harrison himself. When they had gone Harrison stood squarely in front of the minister with a very mixed smile on his face.

“Old man,” he said, “I've got something under my desk that will wash the coal dust and clinkers out of your throat, and I want you to join me in a drink to the rattlingest little thoroughbred I ever knew.”

## ***THE REGENERATION OF A SAINT***

The minister looked up uncertainly, pleased, and yet not quite sure of himself or of the big, queer man in front of him.

“Well,” he said at last, “in view of the circumstances—the exceptional——”

“Oh, come now!” laughed Harrison warningly.

“Well,” repeated the minister, “I don’t care if I do!”

## CHAPTER XX

### A MAN AWAKE

**W**HEN Emily, returning from the busy Yard, dragged her tired feet into the house, its silent friendliness, as if it had been waiting there patiently for her return, overwhelmed her weary spirit, and she sank down to rest in the largest of the library chairs. The whole long course of the night spun around and around again before her closed eyes. The roar of the heavy train behind her, the terrifying sway of the engine on which she had ridden into Oldport, the rush of the shadowy panorama as they sped down the country toward their goal, were jumbled together in her mind in an inextricable mass of disorderly detail.

"Bring me some black coffee, Minnie," she said to the solicitous maid who let her in and who had been her only welcomer so far. "I can't even scrub my face until I have that. Serve it on the library table, and I can rest here until it comes."

Luxuriating in the ample comfort of the chair, she closed her eyes and let her thoughts wander along in search of a resting place. When she again opened them she saw first the breakfast tray on a taboret where Minnie had placed it, and then, as her eyes

## A MAN AWAKE

lifted, her husband and Bessie Von Bianchi standing in the doorway and regarding her with a sort of amusement which for the first time since her childhood caused her a decidedly feminine sense of embarrassment. Whatever she thought of the sight of them together, and the sudden realization that they had been left to their private devices all the days during which she had been away, in that moment her wits were principally concerned with her own disheveled garments, her flying hair, her dusty boots, and her sooty face. At last she was caught off guard with a vengeance! But she only sat still and blinked at them.

"Have you rested well?" asked Trentin.

"What time is it?" she inquired. "I just came in, didn't I?"

"It's dinner time now, dear," explained Miss Von Bianchi. "Your coffee is stone cold."

So Emily knew they had been about her in her sleep. All her natural temper added itself to the resentment which long tolerance of humiliation had accumulated within her.

"Why did you hasten home?" taunted Trentin.

Emily sat up in the chair. Her head swam, and for a moment she reeled with a powerful, nauseating weakness she had often endured of late. Then she managed to steady herself, and getting to her feet, stood leaning on a corner of the table.

"Bessie," she said, in the tone of confident kindness which was a part of her hold on people, "would you mind if I asked you to terminate your visit? I'm not at all well, it seems, and the excitement of the



## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

past few weeks has been more than was good for me. I shall have to be very quiet—more quiet than you would find agreeable. Perhaps you can arrange to leave us—as soon as you like, perhaps.”

The girl laughed lightly and cast a little look at Trentin.

“Certainly,” she replied. “I’m off to-day. You probably have guessed that I have other fish for frying elsewhere.”

She did not even try to simulate the friendly attitude which Emily had constantly adopted toward her. Keen and businesslike, her work was done, the mask removed, and she was off to new endeavors in other fields where men were to be angled for. The smile lingered about her eyes for an instant, and then she crossed over to Emily and stood so near that Trentin could not distinguish one word from another.

“I know you’re done up,” she said relaxing her professional stage expression and letting forth the woman in her for a second or two. “Your lips are pale and swollen, and you’re all puffy and pasty under the eyes. Take care now while there’s time. I’m sorry, too, for—for things. I mean that I had to come down here and into your home this way and do what I had to do with—him. He’s awfully silly, but there isn’t a bad bone in his body. He’s only soft; he never once made it hard for me—demanded things or—anything like—you know what I mean!”

“No,” said Emily, “I do not know what you mean.”

“Then let me tell you,” responded the girl. “You

## A MAN AWAKE

are a much happier woman than you think you are. The worst thing I've had to do on this case," she continued getting back to herself, "was to watch him play golf and listen to his poetry. All around, it's the easiest one I've worked. Don't be too hard on him. I give you my word that he's only weak—not one single bit bad. Not even—gay at all. If some one could only beat some life into him! If he ever wakes up, you'll see! Well, I really am off. Good-by."

She made no ceremony whatever, nor burdened Emily with any effort to shake hands; but simply walked out past Trentin without noticing him, and so upstairs to arrange for her departure.

Trentin and his wife looked at each other for an interval, both loathing the thought of the break which impended, each entirely powerless to avoid its rapid approach.

"I should think," began Trentin half-heartedly "that you might well give some account of your unexpected absence. I suppose Harrison knew of it?"

All the patience went out of her. At first she made no reply. She went quickly over to a drawer where she kept her most personal papers under lock. The rapid movement made her sick and dizzy again, and she held herself by a chair back until her head cleared. Then unlocking the drawer she took out two letters, and with them in her hands turned back to Trentin and held them up.

"These letters," she said, "are yours. They were intended for the eyes of our departing guest, but they also reached mine. I spied on you. I tracked you and

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

shadowed you and tricked you and you did not know it. All this time when you have been insulting me with these wicked allusions to a man who, while he is—has been—nothing to me excepting for the work he was doing for us, judged by that work is so infinitely superior to you that you are not fit to speak of him at all. Because he is a useful man, and you are an idler. Little as he compares with you in refinement and education and real ability and talent, he is worth a dozen golf-playing drones like you because he is doing his work in the world with all his might and all his heart. One can forgive such a man his roughness and his mistakes. One can forgive you nothing. I think you have never been a vicious man. I believe that. You have not done the kind of wrong things which idle men traditionally do. He isn't like that. I suppose he has all the follies which strong, undisciplined men seem to adopt. I think so. I wouldn't answer for his conduct in those ways. But he towers so far above you in actual worth there is no comparison except to say that, whatever he is or is not, you are the worst man I have ever dreamed of seeing! You are too lazy to be useful, and you're even too lazy to be bad! Think of that for a man in these days—too lazy to be bad!"

Her own bitterness, rising out of the stifled rebellion of her heart, choked her. Trentin calmly fished out a silver box and lit a cigarette.

"That's a very eloquent statement for the defense," he observed between puffs of fragrant vapor, "but it doesn't explain your extraordinary confidence in Harrison."

## A MAN AWAKE

"I am only trying to show you to yourself," she answered. "I think you would better not refer to him again in that way, either."

"I am simply adopting the language of the village," replied Trentin.

"I don't believe a word of that!" she cried. "Not a word! Everybody knows the truth."

"Possibly," he assented. "And what about my letters you have stolen? Is there one incriminating word in them?"

"You may be very sure my presence in this house is proof that there is not," she said. "That isn't what I complain of. I complain only that you have been putting to paper and sending to a dangerous and mercenary young woman, who has been laughing at you in her sleeve, an epistle of this unspeakably silly and disgusting nature. Shall I read it to you?"

Trentin's face flushed quickly.

"No," he said. "I remember it. You can't punish me on that evidence for calling the turn on this affair of yours."

A flash of nearly uncontrollable anger shook her whole body.

"Your greatest punishment ought to be your own shame," she said. "Maybe I wouldn't have minded if you had gone at it as a man with any blood in him would have done. I don't believe I should have minded if you had been a—a real, 'live strong man, too strong and alive to be held to a straight line by law or anything. I could have understood, at least, how your impulses—how such a man's natural inborn in-

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

instincts and impulses might have been too great for—for other considerations, if he were thrown into even a brief opportunity for unrestrained exercise of them. I could love a man like that enough to help him away from Opportunity. But you have been just maudlin and vapid and childish and silly. Even the object of your interest must have been sickened by this.”

She tore open one of the letters and began reading aloud.

“Stop that, please!” ordered Trentin sharply.

“No,” declared Emily, “I’m going straight on. I want you to imagine a man writing such stuff to his wife!”

She laughed overloudly, and she knew it. She knew she was going to pieces, that she would not be able even to hold herself upright many seconds longer. But she was possessed by desire to finish the whole indictment before she gave way. Frightful hot waves of ever-increasing weakness swept up over her from her knees to her head, the top of which seemed bound with a slowly tightening metal band. She went on, wondering why she was unable to prevent her voice from being high and shrill.

Then the letter was snatched from her hands. She had not observed Trentin’s quick approach. She let her arms drop limply and looked up into his distorted face with a stupid effort to bring back her scattering senses.

“That’s all of that!” he exclaimed, with his face near hers. “You needn’t think you can ridicule me into forgetting how you’ve taken up this coarse me-

## A MAN A WAKE

chanic whom you defend so nobly. I've been decent enough to you as a husband—as decent as you've deserved. Do you pretend to think you've been decent to me as a wife, with your mad antics in support of this——”

“Don't say it! Don't!” interrupted Emily. She had unexpectedly reëntered into herself, if only for the moment.

“I'll not only say it,” declared Trentin, his voice perfectly cool and calculating every syllable, “but I'll add to it to give you the full weight of my opinion of you and this intolerable bully you have preferred to me. I'll——”

No man could have quite gone on with such a look before him as came out of his wife's eyes just then. As he hesitated, she measured him with a rapid glance and then, stepping lightly back on one foot to lend spring to the movement, threw all her lithe body into her swinging right arm and struck Trentin fair across the side of his face with the flat of her open hand.

It was a terrific blow. Trentin reeled sideways and saved himself from falling only by catching a chair as he went. Whether it stunned him, or whether his surprise at the sudden change in his wife's tactics bewildered him, at first he could see nothing, or think. He realized, presently, that they were standing close together, looking with a mutual but divided horror across the deep, intangible separation which had yawned between them. They remained so for a little, staring into each other's faces, terribly sensible of a new life into which each had been born in pain, and

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

seeking to discover there some hint of meaning, of direction, of final outcome. Perhaps to both the most dreadful agony was that of a struggling conscience with its suggestion that each had been responsible for bringing the other to this pass. A sense of pity that it should have been so actuated them alike. The chasm between them narrowed. In Emily's eyes there were already coming the tears which wash away even these worst unhappinesses.

But Trentin's mind was suddenly full of another thought. The sting of a woman's blow had gone deeper than his face. For the first time in his life he knew the touch of an angry hand. The effect wrought upon him strangely. It aroused something new within him, but he could not tell what it was.

"Boy!" whispered Emily, and held out her arms to him like the mother she had always been more than a wife.

And then in the instant while he looked into the depths of the loving soul outspread before him, Trentin knew to what it was that he had come; and that at last he was a man awake!

So he answered her not a word but taking one of her hands and holding it to his lips for just the touch of it there, he left the house so quickly that he did not hear her muffled cry, nor see her bend and topple and then fall in a quivering heap upon the floor.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE LAST CALL

**E**MILY regained her senses after an interval of unreckoned time. She was still on the floor, as she had fallen when Trentin left the house. For some minutes she lay in silent, immovable misery. Then she got slowly to her feet and labored up the stairs to her room. While she put herself in order after the grime of the long night journey on the coal train, she was now and again assailed by recurrences of the sickening weakness which had been sweeping over her. Many times she was forced to go and lie on her bed until the spell had passed. It did not frighten her, but it added immeasurably to the hydra-headed sorrow in her heart. She got into a crisp muslin dress and was resting, considerably refreshed, when she heard the telephone bell ringing. Thinking there might be some message from Trentin, she arose and hastened down.

“Hello,” said Harrison’s voice. “Listen to this.”

He read her the message about the navy crew, and afterwards told her about his own plan to cut the cruiser out ahead of the conspirators.

“By the way,” he added, “I want to see you before I go. How can we manage it?”



## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"Is it important?" she asked.

"Certainly, it's important!" he replied. "Will you come down to the store, or shall I come over to the house? It don't matter much which, now."

As it was, she could hardly stand up to the telephone.

"You must come over here—I think," she answered, "but——"

She wanted to urge him not to come; but the occasion, all they had been through in company, the adversities they had helped each other to meet, the dangers which were undeniably approaching, the insistent fate which had kept them together and separated all others from them—so many considerations were against her that she could not choose what she knew to be the wiser way. As most struggling men and women have discovered, when the crisis came she found the right road barred against her.

"Yes," she repeated, "come over here."

Afterwards she decided that she would not see him when he did come. Then when she heard his ring she went into the library, and sat in the big red chair, and let Heaven have its way with her.

"I've got only half an hour," said Harrison, standing in front of her and looking down in what appeared to be a hurried and uncertain manner. "You look pretty white. Have you rested any?"

"A little," she replied. "As much as I needed, I think."

"We sail just after sunset," he went on. "I only came over to tell you that the head bookkeeper has

## THE LAST CALL

everything in hand so that you needn't worry about the Yard for a while—until you hear from me again.”

“I shan't worry, Harrison,” she protested. “The cruiser was the main thing, and now she is off safely I feel my share of the work at the Yard is done. I didn't want us to be discredited and disgraced by selling her out to the highest bidder. Now that she is securely on her way, I'm going to let the Yard take care of itself.”

“I suppose you think it will keep on taking care of you,” remarked Harrison.

“We can take care of ourselves if it doesn't,” she replied, assuming as much courage as possible. “But I infer it will, of course. When do you return?”

Harrison laughed at her.

“That's really the question after all, isn't it?” he said. “When am I coming back to carry on the Yard and save the Trentin family from the same poorhouse it took me out of! I know that poorhouse, or used to, almost as well as I know the Yard. You wouldn't like it there. It lacks—what do you call it?—refinement!”

Emily did not answer that.

“That's the real question,” he continued, still in his cynical tone. “I've lugged the Trentins so long they think I'm always going to lug them. Well, I'm not! I'm going to fool them. This business comes pretty near being mine, now. I hold a mortgage on it to secure the money I borrowed and loaned it when we got out from under Whitehead that time. I figure the

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

Yard is as good as mine. I don't notice any Trentins coming forward to make any claim on it."

"No," said Emily, too far done to attempt a dispute with him.

"You admit it!" he declared, with much satisfaction. "That's natural, because you're no Trentin." She saw that his glance had become full of a gloating regard which frightened her.

"I am a Trentin," she said, with quick emphasis. "I am a Trentin, and the Trentins will see to it that their obligations to you are met and that they take control of their own affairs!"

"That makes good poetry," retorted Harrison. "Perhaps your husband will be able to explain it so as to satisfy my loan. How much longer are you going to stand him?"

"Harrison!" she exclaimed, getting up and facing him.

"You can't keep on making believe you aren't ashamed of him," he persisted. "Everybody else is, and so are you. Do you know where he is? I'll bet you don't. Has he ever lifted a pound to help me and you get off this cruiser his drunken father wanted to pawn for pocket money? Hasn't he been about the worst enemy we've had except one? Has he ever done a stroke of anything honest in his life? Hasn't he done all he could to sell us out to a yellow-haired damsel with a police record the world over? Oh, you can't stop me! No, you can't! You know the truth of all this as well as I do. You know it!"

## **THE LAST CALL**

"Supposing I do," said Emily, looking at him calmly, "what have you to do with it?"

"Why—" he hesitated under that well-directed stroke. As usual, his strength was nothing to her clear thinking, and for just a little space she was able to make herself think clearly.

"What do you suggest as a remedy?" she insisted.

"That wasn't the question," he pleaded confusedly.

"Certainly it was," she responded. "You raised it. Now what would you advise me to do? Supposing we consider an elopement. You and I might elope. We could take the cruiser and sail away forever. How does that suit you?"

"Don't get going," he said. Her eyes were quite too bright, and her excitement was apparent in the false treble of her nervous laugh.

"So you won't elope with me?" she cried. "You're simply going to come here and tantalize me with your pictures of my fate, and then leave me to it! Well, then," she grew serious again, "leave me to it! It's what I chose, and it satisfies me, and that's the end of it. When you come back we'll try to pay you what we owe you. Go away, now, and leave me alone."

She was reeling back toward the chair when Harrison grasped her. He had evidently intended only to prevent her from falling, but the touch of her changed him, and in an instant he had thrown his arms about her and caught her close up to him in a fierce embrace. She bent her head swiftly as he did so, but she felt him kissing her hair. Every particle of revolt departed from her, and she felt only mistily conscious of

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

what was going on. She knew that she was being held so tightly she could scarcely breathe, and that Harrison was continually kissing her hair and calling her by her name to look up at him.

It rested her. As she hung there in his arms she felt the weariness leaving her. A delicious rest possessed the whole of her body. She seemed to be making no effort of any kind. All the resistances against which she had been throwing herself for so many weeks seemed magically removed and replaced by a pervading and abundant physical peace. She closed her eyes and slowly lifted her head. She wanted it to lie back upon something and rest. She felt Harrison's arms about her—became sensible that they were his arms and not mere senseless supports to keep a woman from falling. She felt his quick breathing. His nearness to her grew acutely apparent. Her cheek was crushed heavily against his clothing.

Slowly her head moved back. She felt a touch under her chin. He was urging her too deliberate movement. Her eyes half opened, and she looked up into his face, close down to hers and moving nearer. She held herself for an instant, absorbing the expression in his eyes—the gloating, greedy hunger for satisfaction which seemed to her to be the symbol of that which instinctively she had always feared when in his presence. In a flash life came into her. Every muscle of her sprang, and with a great burst of strength she threw herself out of his arms and put herself at the other side of the black oak table.

Harrison smiled—the foolish, unstable smile of the

## THE LAST CALL

man who loses at the game. With her first free breath she knew that they were to be liberated from his devouring influence now.

"Thank you for holding me," she said, "I should have fallen if you had not caught me. I'm not very strong just now. And thank you for coming over, too. I'm glad to see you before you go, and to wish you good luck with the ship. I'm sure she will do all we expect her to do, and that in permitting you to have charge of her we are acting wisely. So then *au revoir* and good luck until we meet again."

For a moment he hesitated, his blood up and his untamable nature in rebellion and impelling him to violence. The level clear-headedness of her tone, her confident manner of implying his subordinate capacity, the abrupt interruption of certain of his private hopes regarding her—Harrison was not the sort of man to accept such conditions readily. There was too much of his black-eyed, easy-hearted mother in him, and of his unsuspected father, too.

But four long-drawn, roaring whistles broke the evening stillness outside the house, and he knew that he must go. The Twenty-Nine was sounding her great voice for the first triumphant time.

"All right," he answered. "I'll be back in three days, though. After that we'll see about the future."

"You and Hector can talk that over later," she said. "He will be sorry to have missed you. But he trusts you fully, and expects you to do the right thing with the ship. Good-by."

He looked at her fixedly. If he had been sure she

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

meant a taunt he could have beaten her to pieces in that very room in the remaining moments left to him. Then, barred even from connected thought by the resolute coldness of her face, he turned and walked out to the porch. As he went down the steps he heard her behind him at the doorway.

"O Harrison," she called, exactly as he had heard her signal to the coachman, "if you see Mr. Trentin ask him to come home, please. I want him. Tell him that."

"Yes," he responded without turning. "Good night."

Harrison had scarcely more than turned into the road after leaving her, than Emily heard the telephone bell again, and ran to the receiver with hopes which once more proved vain. It was the head bookkeeper at the Yard wanting Harrison.

"He is on his way there now," said Emily. "Is anything the trouble?"

"No trouble," replied the head bookkeeper. "The navy crew just came up the harbor on a tug and has gone aboard the cruiser. They fooled everybody by coming that way. Harrison ought to know it. They're in charge of a Lieutenant Culver."

"I will inform Mr. Trentin," said Emily, "and you may tell Harrison yourself when he arrives. He has been here for his last orders."

The Trentins were alive again. She wished the Yard to know that.

"Very well, madam," responded the head bookkeeper, and rang off.

## **THE LAST CALL**

Emily was still cooling her smarting cheeks in the fresh air of the twilight, when from the road behind the house she heard the chattering approach of many people. Some one, running, came out upon the grassy terrace near her, and she felt a great rush of others in the dusk.

“What is it?” she asked nervously.

“The cruiser’s goin’ out, Mis’ Trentin,” cried the woman who had come nearest her. “We’d like to go down on your point an’ see her go by.”

“Come along, all of you,” called Emily, and joined the grateful throng of sweethearts, wives, and children, and of the older village men who had come to see the last of the Oldport ship and of the precious crew of Oldport boys she took away with her into the war.

“They’d ought to hev’ giv’ us more time!” wailed the woman. “My Joe didn’t even come home for his toothbrush. Jest sent me a note sayin’ he’d leave her to Portland. Wa’n’t mended up nor nuthin’——”

The evening was lit by a glorious moon, and the whole surface of the harbor, excepting the deep green shadows under the lee of the outer islands, was glimmering silver. Down across the channel a path of dazzling radiance threw back the reflection of the skies.

“There she comes!” cried a lad’s voice, and as a hush fell on the crowd they saw a long, dark shape steal out into the waters and head off toward the sea. Hardly a whispered word was spoken while the ship came on. It was so still they heard the muffled plunge of her twin engines as her bows cut the glittering pathway and her whole great bulk went surging



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

through into the farther shadows like a mighty phantom. While she was still in the stronger light, some one out of the silence tried to raise a cheer, but his voice broke, and in place of the cheer women could be heard crying, with ill-stifled sobs.

And so, for each one there, the going of the ship had some deep meaning.

With a yearning desire to have Trentin near her again, Emily left the women on the shore and set off toward the town.

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## CHAPTER XXII

### THE WIDOW DIX, FINANCIER

EMILY'S expectation of a complete reconciliation and readjustment of their household, which had carried her through the remainder of the day after Trentin's abrupt departure, was rendered ineffective by his failure to return. That he had left her unknowing of his whereabouts gave her a new sense of loss. In the years they had been together and she had struggled with the varying phases of his curiously unsettled character, he had never put her in an hour's doubt as to his movements. She had always known where he was. It had been a part of his one-sided philosophy to do exactly as his rudderless disposition inclined him at any moment, and to conceal nothing, no matter where the mood took him. With his shifting lack of purpose he combined this sort of fearless independence. Whatever his thoughtlessness led him into, he never attempted to deny or to conceal the consequences. Devoted to the business of following the lead of an absolutely unfettered inclination, he accepted whatever results came upon him with something approaching a chivalrous though perverted disregard for the opinions of those about him. It was this hint of strength in him, misapplied though it was,

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

through and made Emily hopeful even in their darkest moments that some day, when the right temptation came upon him in place of the many of the bad which voraciously beset the way of human nature, his sheer dogged obstinacy might hold him to it, and so, without his own wish, commit him to better ways apart from his old indolent evasion of responsibility. Manlike, whether Fate offered him right or whether wrong, once he made his choice he held it to the end.

And after all, the pain of losing him was greater than anything she had ever suffered by his presence. She wanted him. She had learned to depend upon the perversities of his nature. The vine of her whole heart's life seemed to have clung and clustered upon the very wall which had grown up between them. With a fear which she had not before experienced, she hurried on to seek him in the town.

She was surprised to find the store lighted when she passed that way, and on going in came on Whitehead and Mrs. Dix in excited altercation, with Mr. Pinnot maintaining a more or less dignified attitude of watchful reserve.

"I tell you I want that message sent, and I want it sent now!" Whitehead was insisting in a manner indicating that the dispute had more than just begun.

"And I tell you, sir," responded Mrs. Dix with equal spirit, "that I won't send a single, solitary word of it—there!"

"You've got to!" insisted Whitehead. "You're my employee and I order you to send it! You can't disobey the orders of the president of the company."

## ***THE WIDOW DIX, FINANCIER***

"P'raps not," remarked Mrs. Dix, "but I ain't no employee of no company no longer. I've resigned."

"Resigned? When?"

"Jest about one minute ago, sir," was the answer. "Here's your message. Take it away an' send it yourself."

She threw a bit of paper over the counter to him and walked out into the store.

"I'll have another operator here in half an hour," declared Whitehead. "We'll see about this resignation business later."

On hurrying out he met Emily face to face, but, merely looking her up and down with futile impudence, went on his way without speaking. Her rapid inquiries concerning her husband were interrupted by the entrance of an alert young man in a white duck uniform and some gold braid on his cap.

"Can I send a message?" he asked in a peculiarly soft-voiced manner of not taking "No" for an answer.

"Not from here," replied Mrs. Dix. "There's trouble on the line."

"One moment," whispered Emily quickly. "Aren't you a navy officer?" she said to the young man.

"Yes," he responded, snatching off his cap and smiling, "I am. Perhaps this is Mrs. Trentin?"

"Yes," she answered. "Can I assist you?"

"It's assistance I need, I assure you," he said. "I came down here with a crew to take this ship out to the fleet, got delayed by three or four little accidents and by a conflict of the train orders, or something like

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

that, and just arrived to find her gone and nobody understanding anything."

"You brought a crew?" repeated Emily. "What crew was that other one, the one that did take the ship out?"

"*Was* there one?" demanded he incredulously.

"Certainly. Lieutenant Culver arrived just before she sailed, in a tug with fifty men."

"But I'm Lieutenant Culver!" he exclaimed. Then his fresh round face went long and gray. "See here," he said, "I'll tell you. They've cut her out! They've cut that cruiser out! Sent a fake crew and got her to sea so they can capture her outside and run her into their own fleet! It's a plot, and it's worked! By Jove! By Jove!"

Suddenly he sprang toward the counter, checking the overpowering fear which had come into Emily's mind and which was reflected in the postmaster's troubled face.

"Here," cried the lieutenant, "some one send this!"

"Is it to Washington?" asked Emily.

"No, it's to the admiral in Portland Harbor. He can head her off if I can warn him."

"You can't," she said. "This line is owned by the men who are trying to prevent you from getting the cruiser. They intercept every message intended to assist the United States or ourselves, and we haven't had time to have them stopped in the legal way, whatever the legal way is."

"Isn't there a wireless?" he asked.

"Yes, at the Yard."



“‘Not from here. . . . There’s trouble on the line.’”

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## ***THE WIDOW DIX, FINANCIER***

"Good! If we can only get them and make them understand in time. She's had a good start. Will you show me the place? I have a navy operator with me."

"Why not warn the ship, too? Harrison has men enough of our own to do something if he only knew his danger. It's a pity to let all these village boys be captured without a fight."

"Surely, that's proper."

"And then how are you going to prevent the enemy here from sending some counter messages out from Oldport over this wire, which can be communicated in some way to our disadvantage?"

"I hadn't thought. It would be bad for us. Time is pretty short."

"Cut 'em out, why don't you?" suggested Mrs. Dix in the metallic voice of a rage yet unappeased. The lieutenant leaped.

"Of course!" he ejaculated. "Cut them out! Certainly!"

He went to the door, held up his hand, and a moment later a brown sailorman sprang into the doorway and saluted.

"Finch," said the lieutenant, "ground these instruments here. Cut them out some way so they will work without connections outside the building. Must be done in ten minutes."

"Five minutes," corrected the unmilitary Mrs. Dix.

"Five minutes," agreed the lieutenant.

"Very good, sir," said the sailorman. "Is there a water pipe anywheres around here where I can hitch a wire to?" he asked, turning to Mr. Pinnot.



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"Now, you, madam," went on Culver, bowing to Mrs. Dix, "must reconsider that resignation long enough to make believe send such messages as are filed by these people who are trying to beat us. I know who they are and what the game is. The admiral thought Harrison could stave them off, though."

He gave further orders rapidly, and then, with Emily, left the store and started for the Yard to have a look at the wireless apparatus, telling Finch to follow as soon as he had broken the connections. So close was the margin of time on which they were playing that the man had scarcely got his hands off the work when Whitehead reentered the store. His looks implied defeat; but he went up to Mrs. Dix frankly.

"Mrs. Dix," he said, "I understand your position and you understand mine. I can't find another operator. That crazy station agent has deserted his post to join the cruiser. I have this message and another which it has become necessary, within the last few minutes, to send on at once. I'll give you a hundred dollars apiece if you'll send them for me."

"How much?" asked Mrs. Dix. "Two hundred dollars apiece?"

"Yes," he replied recklessly, "anything you like, only send them in a hurry."

"Where's the money?" she demanded. "This ain't bribery because I ain't your servant no more," she declared. "It's only an extry compensation for a sort o' special job o' work, ain't it?"

"Of course," he assented, pulling out his pocket-

## ***THE WIDOW DIX, FINANCIER***

book. "Here's three-fifty. I'll have to owe you the balance."

"I'll take your watch for security," she interrupted. "It's good, ain't it?"

His face was very red, but he held back his pride, and, hooking off the watch, handed it to her.

"You couldn't use a slightly worn business suit also, could you?" he asked as he did so.

"You needn't sarcasticate me!" retorted Mrs. Dix, who now calculated she had created the maximum delay of which she was capable. "The millinery business hain't taught me nuthin' about finance for nuthin'! Where's your messages?"

She went to the telegraph table and opened the key, wondering what would happen if the Oldport batteries had been cut out, too, so that her own instruments would no longer operate. The first strong click of the sounder answered her fears in full. Finch had attached it to the local batteries after cutting the wires where they led out of the building. Mr. Whitehead watched her with eager interest.

"There!" she exclaimed, when she had ticked off the two telegrams he had given her, and slyly answered herself by working the sounder with her little finger.

"Now have them repeated, if you please," directed Whitehead. It was a request she was not prepared to meet, and she evaded it by the only means left to her.

"You didn't pay me to repeat it," she declared, leaving the table, "only to send."

"Very well, then," he responded. "If it's money you want you have come to the right place for it."

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

Have the messages repeated and I'll pay you— Well, what's the Oldport price to-day?"

Mrs. Dix realized her danger sufficiently to think out ways of escape from it. There really was but one way, and she went straight for it.

"You can take your old telegraph company and go to Halifax with it," said she as flippantly as possible, "an' pertiklerly as I'm a-goin' to lock up the store in jest about a minute. I wouldn't repeat no messages for you, nor nobody else, if they was to give me all the money in the Oldport National Bank an' some over."

"Good!" admitted Whitehead, laughing quite merrily at her decision. "I admire your spirit, madam, besides which, you have saved me several hundred additional dollars and the balance of my personal effects. Never mind repeating them. I think my day's work is done." He laughed again, even more light-heartedly. "I'm going to rest awhile. I wonder how they're getting on at the Yard?"

He went on laughing and talking to himself and Mrs. Dix intermittently as he left the store and sat in one of the big wicker chairs Mr. Pinnot had left there. The relaxing of the strain left him rather weary of overdoing. Mrs. Dix watched him out, and then ran into the back room where Mr. Pinnot had been secretly observing proceedings.

"Keep him here some way," she whispered. "I done all I could, but they hain't hed time enough yit. I'll run down to the Yard an' give 'em these two messages o' his. You've got to keep him here for an hour

## THE WIDOW DIX, FINANCIER

some way. He'll be wonderin' why he don't git no answer to 'em. Don't give him time to worry, an' don't let him out o' your sight till you hear from me again!"

"It's gittin' late," protested the postmaster, "an' I——"

"Sam Pinnot," she whispered fiercely, "don't talk to me! Go out there an' keep amusin' of him till I come back, if it ain't till two in the mornin'. Tell him," she suggested slyly, "tell him one o' your extry fine elephant yarns for a spell."

"You said we was a-goin' to lock up," he urged, not anxious for the work laid out for him.

"Well, then, *lock up!*" retorted the widow, and disappeared with a hurried nod to her late employer as she passed him on the porch.

"I'll redeem that watch, to-morrow," he called after her. "Please keep it wound and regulated. Sure you don't want my clothes?" When she declined to turn and answer him he gave up taunting her, good-naturedly satisfied with the end of the big work he had undertaken.

"Done and well done," he remarked to himself in a sleepy undertone. "If we work the market right to-morrow we'll pay for that cruiser five times over, and have the holy terror of all sea fighting in our hands to boot. By this time she——"

He felt for his watch, struck the empty pocket, started, and then laughed again like a boy.

"Wonderful woman that Widow Dix," he reflected. "Somehow I'll have to see more of her. Maybe——" he slapped his thigh with an open palm. "I'll get that

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

four hundred back the first thing to-morrow morning! Still, she was worth it to us to-night. That's why she was so hard. When a woman ever does get a man in a corner, she boosts the price of getting out."

"Good evenin', Cap'n Whitehead," remarked Mr. Pinnot, emerging from the store. "Fine moon this month, ain't it, sir?"

"Remarkable!" answered the loungee with cordial enthusiasm. "I was just thinking I've been moonshining here on your porch just about long enough, Mr. Postmaster."

He sat up, and then got to his feet.

"Could you tell me the hour?" he asked. "For the first time in my life a woman has relieved me of my watch. My feelings indicate that it's near bedtime."

"It ain't late, sir," declared the postmaster enticingly. "I'll be settin' up a while yit. I never see a moon like that that I ain't reminded of the time I eloped with the Rajahrina of Bawalpore, one night on elephant back in the wilds o' the East."

"With the what?" asked Whitehead. "What was it you eloped with?"

"The Rajahrina of Bawalpore," said Mr. Pinnot, with a strong accent of assurance. "Rajahrina is lingo for 'princess,' or somethin' of that 'ristocratic order."

"Ah!" responded Whitehead. "It was a night like this, was it?"

He pulled out a cigar, which the postmaster noted was not purchased from the stock in the store. Then

## ***THE WIDOW DIX, FINANCIER***

without offering his companion another, he sat down and began lighting it. Mr. Pinnot measured the cigar with his eye. It was a long one.

"And you eloped with her, you say?" repeated Whitehead, "on elephant back?"

Mr. Pinnot lay back in his porch chair, closed his eyes, and drew breath deeply. The power was come upon him; he marveled at the spectacle of his victim. It was going to be very simple. The taste of the tale lay sweet upon his tongue. Presently he began, and his voice flowed most seductively. It was more than an hour later when Mr. Pinnot's muse withdrew her fervor from him. Exactly in the middle of an exciting tangle in the yarn his mellow old voice ceased flowing, and he sat up in his chair and yawned. For just that moment, when for all his practiced skill the end of the adventure at Bawalpore was perilously near, his watchful eye had seen the glint of moonlight on some moving points of burnished metal.

"Well," urged Mr. Whitehead, "go on, why don't you?"

"That's about all I remember of it, I guess," said the postmaster. "It was a good spell ago, you see."

"But you aren't going to break it off there, are you?" demanded the audience, sitting up. "What became of the skipper, and the whatever-you-call-her—the girl? What became of her? Where does the elopement— See here, Pinnot, what's that out there, I wonder? Aren't those soldiers?"

The lieutenant ran up the steps to the porch, leaving his men in the road behind him. There were fifty

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

of them, and they made a long and warrior looking line.

"Mr. Whitehead, isn't it?" he asked. "I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to go to your own house and— and remain there for the present. That is, under guard."

"Very well, young man," replied Whitehead coolly. "I'm always glad to oblige the navy when I can do it consistently. How long will my arrest continue?"

"Hardly arrest, sir," said the lieutenant. "I shouldn't do that."

"But would if you could, eh?" interrupted Whitehead with a laugh. "I understand. I'll be leaving town to-morrow morning. That's what you want, isn't it?"

"That would help, sir," answered the lieutenant. "I've taken possession of the Yard and the town for the present. If you like to go away, I shan't presume to interfere with you, of course."

"Too bad!" exclaimed Whitehead. "But it's no more than I expected. I'm sailing for the other side next Wednesday, anyway. Too bad you lost that cruiser, though."

"Wasn't it!" exclaimed the lieutenant.

Whitehead followed him into the road. "The man you ought to arrest," he went on, "is this Pinnot here, who spins yarns that unravel before he ends them." Then he noticed Emily standing behind the line of men with Mrs. Dix.

"Oh, it's the little wife, isn't it!" he cried. He forced his way through the ranks and went up to her.

## ***THE WIDOW DIX, FINANCIER***

“ They’ve played you for about all there was in you, haven’t they? ” he said in a gentler tone. “ I’ve been sorry to see it all the time. I used to stand on my porch and watch you through the glasses. You’re a true little sport, and I wish you had worked for me instead of them. You’d have won instead of losing, and I wouldn’t have run away and left you at the end of it, either. You’re looking for the Poet, I suppose. Poets’ wives usually cultivate that practice early in life, I notice. Well, if I can assist you——”

“ March! ” commanded the lieutenant sharply.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### UNDER WAY

**H**ARRISON went straight from Emily to the Yard and on board the cruiser for a final going over of things in the engine rooms. When he came on deck again the light of the summer day had gone. Through the Yard the sharp points of the arc lights dotted the irregular darkness. In a spot of white glare thrown upon the granite paving near the main gate he saw the sentry pacing his short beat with his navy rifle slung across the hollow of his left arm, farmer fashion. The green crew had taken hold well. There was no need to wait for the tardy navy men from Portsmouth. Every mechanical need except the working of the guns could be met without difficulty by the experienced two hundred selected from the Yard. He was going to use the navy crew as a blind behind which to steal the ship away from Whitehead and his employers.

Suddenly he noticed the sentry bring his rifle around in front and swing square in his tracks to bar the gateway. Harrison sprang down the gang plank and ran up through the shadows, fearing several things. He found Trentin trying to gain admission.

"What for, at this hour?" asked Harrison,

## UNDER WAY

eying Trentin significantly. "Everything is beyond your reach now. You can't spy out anything here without getting shot for it. You better trot back home."

"Harrison!" protested Trentin eagerly.

"I don't want you around here!" interrupted Harrison. "I don't want you or your yellow-haired side partner either. It's a wonder she hasn't tried to get in herself before this. You get out! When I want you you'll know it soon enough. Sentry, you shoot anyone who comes through here without a pass from me—and there are no passes out!"

Harrison turned toward the cruiser, not because he was trying to stay his violent tongue, but because he knew it was time she was on the move. Even then, however, his undisciplined and tameless temper flashed up into a fierce heat, and he sprang back toward the gateway.

"Don't you come back again!" he called. "Don't you come anywhere near me! I'm too—I'm so damned—I don't like it! You—" His words jumbled together in a confusion of futile rage. He took no note of Trentin afterwards, whether or not his orders had been understood, but went back to the offices. He thought he might have to pilot the ship down to the Light himself, and he wanted a chart or two. Perhaps he would be away from the Yard some days.

The head bookkeeper was at the wireless telegraph booth in the inner room, testing and experimenting and putting the telephone receiver on his head and grabbing it off nervously.

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"There's no great kick to it," he whispered, as Harrison came up to him. "But I could bet someone was trying to get us. What do you suppose?"

"Haven't got time to suppose anything," responded Harrison. "If anybody wants to call me they'll have to go to war. I'm off now. Look after things," he added to the head bookkeeper. "There won't be much to do for a while, I'm afraid, but just keep going till you see me again. Call Mrs. Dix if the wireless really gets going. Someone may want to get you from below. She's the only one here who understands anything about it. Well—good-by. I'm going aboard. I may not be back."

"All right. Good luck!"

Harrison was met at the inboard end of the gang plank by a tall man with a blond beard. His quick suspicions flashed again.

"Hello," he said, "what you doing here?"

"I'm Lieutenant Culver," answered the stranger. "I'll take command here, presently. I see you have things in very fair shape—yes, very fair shape. But she isn't painted."

"Very fair, but unpainted—yes!" agreed Harrison. "Anything further?"

"Um-um-m-m—well, she will do," replied the lieutenant cautiously. "The painting should have been done. However, it's too late now. There are men enough aboard to work her, I find. That's clever of you."

"Thanks!" said Harrison.

## UNDER WAY

"Good night, then," remarked the lieutenant politely. "I will be getting under way, now."

"I see!" said Harrison. "If the ship's speed is anything like yours she'll make a new and very fresh record for herself. Maybe you don't know who I am. I'm Harrison, and this ship is mine. Don't let that slip your mind just on account of a little war or two!"

"I was under the impression, sir," responded the lieutenant, "that——"

"Well, you get out from under it quick!" interrupted Harrison. "This is the greatest place on earth to get relief from impressions. After this war I'm going to start a health resort for cases like yours. Now you go aft! You take what men you've got with you and go down aft on the quarter-deck, behind the turret, where the wind won't blow on you, and you stay there till further orders. I don't care if you're the great-great-grandfather of fourteen secretaries of the navy. I don't give one royal, continental damn who or what you are or where you hail from. This is my ship, and I'm going to take her down to the Light, and after that I'm going to stay with her until she's picked up the fleet. I wasn't, but I am now. If you don't like your funeral arrangements you take your navy crew and you toddle off home. If it's lack of paint on this ship of mine that hurts your feelings, you skip ashore and try painting the town of Oldport red, white, and blue. *I'm* going to sea! Understand?"

"Certainly," answered Culver, with surprising amiability. "Just as you like, on one condition."

"Condition?" growled Harrison dangerously.

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"On condition that you get her under way at once," said Culver with an agreeable smile. "That's the main thing, isn't it?"

"Looks like it," replied Harrison, considerably mollified. "Where are your men, anyhow?"

"Just where you wanted them to be, sir," declared the lieutenant, "down aft. I'm going to join them."

"Go ahead," said Harrison. "I'll take her out. By the way," he added, "how did you get aboard without coming through the gate?"

"I'll explain that later," laughed Culver. "We got here, all right!"

Harrison looked with satisfaction at the men he had posted on the decks. They seemed fit and ready for anything, and had easily acquainted themselves with the ship each had had some part in building. He doubted that any other improvised crew could have broken in so readily. Hatch was in general charge, and the men were with him loyally. Harrison went onto the forward bridge and blew a short blast of the signal whistle to call in his fifty sentries; and watched them trooping down to the ship, each eager to be ahead of his fellows.

"Have those men sent forward on the main deck, Hatch," he ordered. "I'll post them as soon as she's clear of the harbor."

"Very good, sir," answered Hatch. "That navy crew——"

"I know all about them," said Harrison. "You look after this end of the ship."

## UNDER WAY

"Yes, sir," replied Hatch. "Will we use the tug, sir?"

"What tug?" demanded Harrison. "Certainly not. There's room enough. She'll work herself out. I didn't— See here, who gave orders for any tug, anyhow?"

"Why, sir, that navy crew——"

"I told you I knew about that, Hatch," growled Harrison. His nerves were wearing down to the shreds. "Send the tug away and stand by till you're wanted. See to those men first."

He backed the cruiser into the broad harbor and headed her out toward where the yellow spot of the Light marked the way to sea. He had given the course to his volunteer quartermaster who the day before had been running an automatic bar machine in the company's shops, and was indicating it on the chart he had pinned to the folding table next the wheel when he heard steps on the ladder leading to the bridge, and, wheeling, saw the head of a man peering over the top step at him.

"Who are you?" called Harrison. "Come up out of that shadow, if you want anything."

"It's I," was the answer, and Trentin leaped up to the bridge and came over to Harrison's side.

"Don't ask me any questions, Harrison," he whispered, half out of breath.

"How did you get here?—that's one for you," retorted Harrison. "East by sou', half sou'," he added to the quartermaster, "till you bring Bass Point in line with the Light, then straight out. Didn't I tell you,"

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

he continued to Trentin, "to keep away from me altogether?"

"Don't be silly," begged Trentin. "I could tell all that any day. I want to be put to work—at anything. Perhaps you don't trust me. But if you can, I want to do it. I've made a lot of mistakes, Harrison."

"That's right," agreed Harrison, becoming sarcastically cordial for the instant. "You haven't made anything else, so far."

"Well, then, give me a chance now," said Trentin. He came nearer the other man. "Harrison," he said, in the low tone the presence of the Oldport helmsman demanded, "I want to tell you, also, that I apologize to you, as a whole, for things too numerous to be mentioned at one time. I realize now that I've been a good deal of a cur."

"It's about time you did realize it," responded Harrison. "You've been one. Have you told that to—Emily?"

"Supposing we omit my wife from the discussion," said Trentin. His own accession of self-assurance on that point surprised him as much as it did Harrison, who looked at him, seemed about to speak, and then, very plainly at loss for right words, gave a trivial order to the steersman. Both knew the situation had in that brief time undergone a change which affected their relative positions. Like all of his class, Harrison found himself powerless to use the advantages of mere force against a man of superior mind. It was Trentin, freshly converted to the pursuit of new ideals and

## UNDER WAY

eager to lay hold on them at his own expense, who first set away his pride. Even as he spoke his words of self-abnegation he felt a new sense of command which dealt not with himself alone.

"I'm ready for anything, Harrison," he said. "I know every inch of the harbor and the bay, and I can handle the bridge end of any kind of a craft. Let me do something, and go on out with you. Give me a hand in it—anything you like. You needn't fear I'll play false to you. You can shoot me if I do, can't you?"

"That don't bother me," replied Harrison. "I suppose your real idea is to go on out to the fleet and then claim you did the trick yourself."

"Try me," suggested Trentin, suppressing an anger he knew the other would not understand. "You'll need men badly enough to run some risks, before you get through. I tell you I can do anything outside the engine rooms. I've forgotten most of my Annapolis machine-shop work years ago, but I can do the rest."

"How would you like to stoke?" asked Harrison. He didn't mind playing the case out a little to the other's cost. But again his different wits availed nothing against Trentin's long-dormant but undulled agility of brain and the penetrative power of his quicker thought.

"Very good," responded Trentin alertly. "Is that orders? To whom do I report below?"

"By George, I do need you!" admitted Harrison, fairly driven out of cover, "and I'm going to give you a trial and take the risk this once. I need you just that bad. I'm going to make you second officer, in charge



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

of the navigating. That will give me a chance to keep both eyes on those green engineers. They need it. Do you know the way out?"

"Every foot of it," replied Trentin. "I've done it a hundred times for the fun of the thing with all sorts of ships, too. How much does she draw as she is?"

"Thirty-six-six for'ard," said Harrison. "Let's see you try your hand."

He walked to the starboard end of the bridge and stood there watching Trentin give directions to the wheel. For ten minutes there was silence between them. Then Harrison came forward. Perhaps he knew that his pretensions of authority had found their natural end at last; perhaps there was enough of right-heartedness in him in that moment of great attainment so that if they had found their end he did not care, his work being nearly done. The moonlight was not yet strong enough for Trentin to see his face; but a change in his voice and manner were apparent—a hesitation and a quietude and the dignity of high subordination.

"I think I'll go aft awhile, if you don't mind," he said.

"All right, Harrison," replied Trentin without turning from where the electric lamp threw a hooded beam on the small chart he had had pinned in front of the helm, "go along. Don't let them give her over seven knots until I ask for it, please. When we turn the Light I shall want all you can give her, at the bell."

Harrison made no answer, and left the bridge. Trentin's new sense of mastery awed but did not overwhelm him. On the contrary, his fallow mind adapted

## **UNDER WAY**

itself with marvelous facility to the demands of the emergency. Emily seemed constantly before his eyes. As he leaned over one end of the bridge and glanced down the long, lean flank of the cruiser just rising gently to the harbor swell that spread away into the darkness toward the shore a pearly line of foam, he remembered the work which she had done—the work he had left undone—complete and accomplished in this mighty ship.

So, quenching the fierce pain of his regrets in the abundant volume of his deep resolve, he turned his face from where the gleam of softer lights told him his home had been, and steered away into the untried sea.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### A WIRELESS MESSAGE

**A**N hour after Trentin took the direction of the cruiser Harrison came back to the bridge. The Light was far astern and the ship headed off now toward the rendezvous where she was to find the fleet. A cool wind blew aft, and the high moon lit sea and vessel brilliantly.

"A pipe would taste good," remarked Harrison, possibly because there seemed nothing else remaining to him in this part of the ship. "Tobacco is one of the things I forgot."

"Try a cigar," responded Trentin. He reached for his case and then added: "I forgot something, too. I handed my cigar case to Lieutenant Culver on the tug and he didn't give it back."

"The tug?" repeated Harrison. "So that's how you got aboard, is it? A man spoke to me about that tug. I didn't understand. I was too busy getting her out."

"I was down on our private pier in front of Whitehead's place," explained Trentin, "and the tug with the navy crew aboard came in there. They didn't seem to know their way up so I showed them, and we all came over the outboard side of the cruiser together.

## **A WIRELESS MESSAGE**

Culver said he had orders to get aboard secretly, as it was supposed some one was trying to cut the cruiser out."

"Several were," replied Harrison, with emphasis which Trentin did not understand. "I supposed the navy people were coming down by special train. There's only fifty of them. She gets the balance from the fleet to-morrow. I didn't fall head over heels in love with this Culver."

"He was agreeable on the tug when I saw him," said Trentin; "but he seems to be thoughtless about cigars. What is she making now?"

"Somewhere around a hundred and twenty-six turns a minute," replied Harrison. "That means she's been doing over twenty-one knots ever since you rang for it when you turned the Light. I'm giving her all there is in her just to settle her down. There have been some little breaks, but nothing to stop for. One man got scalded pretty bad. This is the first time she's been away from the dock, you understand. She's turned her engines over, but she never cast off a line before this."

Harrison walked back to the armored chart house, just forward of the first of the funnels. Trentin heard him give a call. When he reached the chart house himself he found Harrison working rapidly at the wireless telegraph apparatus ranged along the rear wall. The long turtle-back, two-inch steel cover which Harrison himself had invented to protect the mechanism from ordinary gun fire, when not in actual use and from splinters at all times, had been lifted by its counter-weights to give him room.

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"Somebody's trying to get us, I believe," he said. He kept on testing and twirling and tightening and releasing.

"I can beat sense into almost any kind of machine if I try," he remarked, with a boastful simplicity of manner which Trentin was far enough on his way to understand. "Now, then!"

The narrow paper tape began running slowly and with irregular, jerky spurts.

"Can you read the Morse alphabet?" asked Harrison.

"Not a line of it," answered Trentin.

"Damnation!" exclaimed Harrison, "neither can I. I always depended on that little station-agent fellow, and he got left when we sailed. All I know is the machine."

They looked at the curling tape dubiously. The message appeared to be running strong and clear now, with hardly a break. Harrison buckled on the head telephone and took the vibrations direct on the ear for a few seconds, after which he threw off the gear and began swearing in his most finished style. Suddenly there was a click somewhere in the mechanism and the tape stopped automatically as the machine went silent.

"All over!" remarked Harrison, together with sundry verbal ornamentations which Trentin found it impossible not to tacitly indorse. "It's a nice missing-word contest to prevent us from being lonesome in the night." Again he called on all the constituted powers to witness to his wrath.

## **A WIRELESS MESSAGE**

"We ought to find out," said Trentin, tiring of futile curses.

The machine clicked again and the tape started running. Trentin picked it up and examined the characters.

"It's the same thing over again, whatever it is, Harrison!" he cried. "They are repeating it. That means it's worth knowing."

"We can't go back," said Harrison. "It might be the fleet calling us. Marconi has a way of telling where your calls come from, but we don't own it. We haven't got time to monkey, anyhow. We better go on and stick it out."

"Haven't you a signal book?"

"Haven't got anything except one unpainted armored cruiser under way," retorted Harrison. "That ought to have been enough!"

The helmsman called Trentin, and he and Harrison went out. The pale flash of a searchlight had swept low above the horizon directly in the cruiser's course.

"Maybe that's on the fleet," suggested Harrison. "It's a long way off."

"It is too far east," said Trentin in a decisive manner which meant more than the trivial thing it dealt with. "More likely it is on the Kennebec forts. They're down there, somewhere. Due east for twenty-two knots," he said to the helmsman, "then let me know. You see, Harrison, I'm going outside a bit before heading toward Portland. We're too close in as it is."

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"All right," assented Harrison. "You're navigating. That wireless— Hello! Who's that?"

Another man was coming on the bridge. They saw that he wore a belt with two revolvers hanging on it.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said Lieutenant Culver pleasantly. "Are you ready for me now?"

"Oh— Mr. Culver," said Trentin quickly. He crossed over, giving Harrison a nudge as he did so. "Haven't you a telegraph operator with you? We want to get the apparatus working."

"It is exactly what I came to suggest," answered Culver. He walked back to the head of the ladder and said something the others on the bridge did not make out. Immediately three of the navy crew came up the ladder. They were armed with rifles.

"These fellows understand it thoroughly," explained Culver, "and I myself can read the Morse code, if that will assist you. It happens that none of these men speak English. That is one trouble with your service, isn't it?"

"With whose service?" asked Harrison.

"The American service, of course," responded Culver.

"I see they don't use navy rifles, either, Mr. Culver," remarked Trentin, "or else the moonlight deceives me."

"Exactly," replied Culver, giving a hitch to his belt and stopping short there.

"Then what the—" began Harrison, in his ugliest tone; but Trentin cut in on him.

"We've been trying out the instruments in the

## **A WIRELESS MESSAGE**

chart house," he continued, addressing the lieutenant in a tone of conciliatory candor, "and we don't make much of them. I can send Morse a little—a very, very little—or used to do it when I was a boy. But I've forgotten half I knew. Can't you be persuaded to give us a lesson now you're here?"

He led the way to the chart house. Harrison and Culver followed, leaving the three men on the bridge with the helmsman.

"We were working the receiver by hand to see if we could get a record on the tape," explained Trentin. He picked up the end of the paper and handed it to the lieutenant with an apologetic laugh.

"Can you translate my first offense?" he asked.

"Oh, it's quite clear," replied Culver. "'Harrison, Cruiser Twenty-Nine,'" he read slowly. "You evidently sent this to our distinguished pilot and shipmaster, here."

"Yes," laughed Trentin. "Just to imitate a genuine message of some sort."

"'Navy crew here,'" translated Culver. "'Return at once.' Then there's some more of it."

"Yes, I tried it twice," said Trentin. He moved around behind Culver as if to look over his shoulder at the tape.

"'Navy crew here, return at once,'" repeated the lieutenant rapidly. "Then there are two other words—d-a-n-g-e-r, and E-m-i-l-y—'Danger, Emily.'" He looked up quickly. "What sort of a trick is this?" he said. He threw down the tape and reached for his belt. At that instant Trentin threw one arm clear



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

around his neck from behind, and pinioned a hand with the other. As the arm tightened on his throat to shut off the coming cry for aid, Culver threw his free hand up to save his breath, if possible, which was the exact gesture Trentin was playing for. Putting on all his weight so as to completely throttle his captive, he whispered to Harrison :

“ Slip his belt off him and get his guns away ! ”

In a second it was done, so quietly that not a sound reached the men on the bridge outside, standing there with the hum of the cruiser in their ears and the drive of the split night air. Then Harrison held a revolver muzzle against the man's forehead while Trentin made a gag of two handkerchiefs and a glove and bound it about his mouth.

“ Now, those fellows outside,” whispered Trentin. “ Can you speak their language ? ”

Harrison shook his head.

“ Stay here with him, then,” directed Trentin, and went out, closing the door.

“ Your officer wishes you to return aft and bring up all the arms and ammunition you can carry,” he said. “ Along with you, now. Leave your rifles there at the corner of the bridge.”

His free use of their language, added to the voice of uncompromising command, did the work. The men saluted, deposited their weapons as directed, and scrambled down the ladder on their way aft. Then Trentin returned to the chart house. Culver was glaring at them over the top of the gag.

“ Now, sir, whatever your name is,” said Trentin,

## **A WIRELESS MESSAGE**

"we understand each other perfectly. You had this fake crew put aboard to cut the cruiser out while the real crew was held up on the railroad line by somebody's orders to a well-disciplined train dispatcher. You see now it cannot be done. So I have a proposition for you. If you will send a short reply to that message you just read for us, you and your men shall be put into sailing boats and given a chance to join your ships. Otherwise you will be shot as soon as possible and your men will be sent ashore as prisoners. Now do you send or do we shoot? Send?"

Culver wagged his head in a painfully reluctant sign of assent, and was immediately unbound by Harrison. Even when he was free he did not speak, but walked over to the instruments, made some adjustments, put on the headpiece, and then turned to Trentin for his orders.

"Say, 'Yours received. Have full control of ship. No one hurt. Proceeding. Notify fleet for us. Acknowledge. Harrison.'"

"No," corrected Harrison, "not me."

"Send it," commanded Trentin. "They don't know I'm here. It would bewilder them."

The prisoner appeared to be sending the message. It was a slow process, and Trentin went to the bridge again. The three men had not returned. From the port side he looked aft, and listened intently to some excited talk in the language of their troublesome passengers. It interested him more than he expected, and he did not go back at once to the chart house as he had intended when he came out. After some time Har-

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

rison stepped through the doorway and spoke to him.

"She answers that it's all right," he said. "What about the prisoner?"

Even as he spoke there was a suspicious sound inside, and then the rush of running feet, quickly swallowed up by the multitudinous noises of the speeding cruiser. Both men went in quickly. The prisoner was not there. The only sign of him was his belt of cartridges with the empty cases where Harrison had taken out the two revolvers.

"That's my fault!" cried Harrison angrily.

"Never mind," said Trentin. "We had to fight anyhow. I'll stay here. I have the three rifles those men left and this revolver of his and the belt full of cartridges. You take the other revolver. Have you any men armed?"

"Fifty, down for'ard."

"Take them aft as far as they'll go, and try to hold Culver's crowd in that part of the ship. Notify the rest of the crew what to expect. Close water-tight doors and post guards everywhere they could get at the mechanical working of the ship. Unless they can reach the steering gear or the engines we can keep her going in spite of them until we make the fleet. It won't be a long run now, and they'll be out looking for us. Isn't everything vital below the armored deck?"

"Sure," said Harrison. "We can close that tighter than Pip Meguire's henhouse!"

"Then put some men in each engine room and two men under—you see—*under* each dangerous opening

## **A WIRELESS MESSAGE**

in the armored deck. Unless they have dynamite with them they can't stop her then."

"Unless they shot you and me up," suggested Harrison.

"We can shoot as straight as any of them can," retorted Trentin. "Go ahead."

"By the time I've posted all those guards I won't have more than a dozen men left," said Harrison. "Still, you're right. It's all we can do. So long!"

He bounded down the ladder and ran forward on the main deck. Looking over the rail of the bridge Trentin saw the white jackets of the new uniforms racing into the superstructure beneath him. Harrison halted by the side of the forward turret and called up.

"I'm going to try and keep them aft of the superstructure. If I can, they won't have a show. Isn't that right?"

"Right!" responded Trentin.

And from that time, when his approval was sought and given, he knew it was he who was master in the Trentin ship.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE FIGHT FOR THE SHIP

**F**OR half an hour afterwards the cruiser raced onward in a silence unbroken except by the rush of her own swift motion against the wind and sea. Trentin admired her steady conduct—the long, swinging pace at which she took the quartering swell, and the solidity of her hull against the vibrations of her spinning screws. Not a word of speech came up to him from the deck. But for him and the solitary helmsman the ship might have been deserted. The moon was high, and the whole superstructure, as Trentin looked watchfully along it from the bridge end, was brilliantly illuminated. Still, in all that half hour he caught no sign of life through the network of empty boat frames. It was evident that both sides were playing for time and position.

A flash of light on metal startled Trentin's eyes and drew his attention to the fore-and-aft bridge which ran from the rear of the chart house back to the second military mast, and along which Culver had probably made his escape. Three men were moving stealthily toward the main bridge. Trentin was sufficiently familiar with the cruiser's designs to remember that the only right way to reach the after end of the fore-and-

## ***THE FIGHT FOR THE SHIP***

aft bridge was by entering the superstructure wall and climbing to the signal platform built around the mainmast. The only other way was to get on top of the stern turret and reach the signal platform from the outside by means of a ladder. Unless Harrison had surrendered the superstructure without a struggle, which was hardly imaginable, it did not seem reasonable to Trentin to suppose that any of Culver's men could have effected such a move, and he was therefore quite prepared to receive some of his own people when the three men stole onto the main bridge directly behind the man at the wheel.

"Hi!" exclaimed Trentin.

The helmsman started and turned toward the source of the sound inquiringly. As he did so, the first of the three men threw back a right arm and lunged straight into the steersman's back. The fellow uttered an agonizing scream as the knife penetrated his body, wheeled full about, received another vicious stab in the stomach, and pitched over to the planking in a heap.

At the first blow Trentin had thrown himself down under the shadow of the canvas rail so that his exact whereabouts was for the moment unknown to the others. His heels clicked against one of the rifles left by Culver's men on their previous visit. Just that significant touch reassured him. All his watery spirit turned to iron in the face of deadly peril and the knowledge that he had good means to meet it. Leaving the rifles for later use, he drew Culver's revolver from his coat pocket, where he had stowed it immediately after its capture. His boyish acquaintance with

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

firearms of every sort taught him the instant his fingers ran over it what weapon he was handling and that he could use it to advantage. Something he thought just then of his sparrow-shooting made him smile.

Two of the men hauled the writhing body of the helmsman out of the way. The other sprang forward to catch up the wheel. Trentin shot him through the head and he fell like bricks. One of the others took the wheel. The second leaped toward where the revolver had flashed. Trentin's number two shot interrupted that attack, and before the man was fairly down Trentin was over him, with his gun at the head of the third, who held to the wheel in dogged bewilderment.

"Sou-sou-east, half east," said Trentin, in the man's own language, "unless you'd like a hole through you. Have you any weapons?"

In answer the man dropped the helm and caught Trentin by the waist to throw him over the bridge rail into the sea. Something slippery got under Trentin's feet. He went down in the blood of the murdered steersman; but the fall broke the hold of his antagonist, and in that instant, still flat on his back, he straightened one arm with the revolver in it and brought it down on the other's head as hard as he could. The man reeled off him. Trentin got up. It was difficult, for his hands slid on the little pools of drying blood about him. The foreigner lay unconscious. He wore a belt, and Trentin took it off and tied his arms behind him. Then he got the cruiser on her course again, and heard the pop of a shot or two be-

## ***THE FIGHT FOR THE SHIP***

hind him, well down astern. Once a man's shout, high pitched and frightened, was added to a shot.

Trentin wondered if he were to be left long alone. The havoc he had wrought began to appeal to him in the terms of its results, rather than of the purpose which had actuated him. He looked backward at intervals over his shoulder, thinking of how the man before him had been stabbed, and that if he got his own mind too closely on the guiding of the ship he would be unable to shoot as he ought.

But anxiety over his own safety and the likelihood that he could not defend himself and navigate the ship—even the possibility that some one would steal up behind him and hold a revolver to his head with the demand that he steer to order or be killed, as he had served the third of the three who had attacked him—all that amounted to nothing then compared to the strong sense of victory over himself which passed whatever he felt or failed to feel as to immediate events. That he was doing a man's work in a man's place; that he felt no great fear of anything; that a phase of his own being which no visit of Fate had chanced before to call into play was upon him, rejoiced him greatly. Enough remained of his imaginative attitude toward things the most of men held ordinary, to interest him in himself; and in the intense sharpness of detail with which every movement of the night threw its picture on his mind, he resolved that the new page of his life which Emily's unexpected blow had turned should not be folded back. A tremendous desire to go on and through whatever intervened before the



## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

attainment of an ideal outcome which repeatedly if faintly was manifesting itself already, inspired him and was expressed, to the vast relief of his overwrought senses, by the magnificent onrush of the cruiser.

There was a scattered burst of rifle fire at the stern. The fight seemed to be coming to something. It moved about the turret from port to starboard and back again. The ship kept working well. Trentin wished he could reach the speaking tube without leaving the wheel. He wanted to know how the enemy was being held above the protective deck. A minute later he heard a man running up the ladder to the bridge, and would have shot him if he had not recognized Hatch.

"Shan't I spell you at the wheel, sir?" he asked. "Harrison asked me to come up. Where's Perkins?"

"Done for, I'm sorry to say," said Trentin. "See there."

"We heard the shooting," Hatch managed to say. He stepped high over the corpse. Trentin let him have the wheel and gave him the course. Then he went to the speaking tube and ascertained that the engine rooms were so far safe and that the crews were working in good heart with the fight going on over their heads. The firing kept on.

"Hatch," asked Trentin suddenly, "have any of the Yard boys been hit?"

"Lots of 'em, sir," answered Hatch. "Our fellows have got plenty of sand, but they can't shoot very good. I heard Harrison say it was about the first time he'd ever fired a gun—to-night was, I mean."

## ***THE FIGHT FOR THE SHIP***

Trentin went into the chart house, and, picking up Culver's cartridge belt, filled his pockets with revolver ammunition. He ejected the empty shells he had fired already and reloaded. Then he went out to the bridge.

"I'm going back to see what's on, Hatch," he said. "I'll send you a man just as soon as I can so you won't have to stay alone. Watch out behind you all the time. There's a leak somewhere at the end of that inboard bridge. If anything happens and you need help blow the siren whistle as hard as you can. There's the cord, the middle one over your head."

He slipped cautiously down the ladder, and ran along the port side of the main deck inside the superstructure wall, which, amidships, was flush with the freeboard of the vessel and turned in fore and aft to meet at a point behind each of the turrets. He met no one. The fight was confined to the extreme end of the inclosed deck, where the Yard men, under Harrison, were trying to keep the cutting-out party corralled on the quarter-deck. The enemy had forced the port steel door of the superstructure partly open, and were shooting through the crack. Harrison's men—only four of them left—were firing from behind the carriages of the six-inch broadside guns and other convenient shelter which gave them a line on the door. The scene was brilliantly lit by the incandescent lamps supplied by the dynamos below.

"They're making an extra lot of fuss just now," said Harrison when Trentin joined him on the safe side of a gun shield. "So far we've held them off, but a lot of our fellows are out."

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

"That means something," declared Trentin, as a terrific volley sent bullets plashing against the steel beams all around them. "You must be ready for a dash of some sort under cover of this. Hello! Look sharp!"

Some one had fired a rifle on the starboard side opposite them, and one of the four yard men was rolling on the deck vainly trying to get his hand up to a jagged wound in his back. They looked quickly over and saw one of Culver's men clawing at the inside of the starboard superstructure door to open it.

"That fellow got in here by the six-inch gun port—climbed along the gun!" cried Trentin. He fired at the man and missed. In another instant the door was thrown open. Culver was the first man in. He leaped straight through without touching anything, glaring angrily about him. Then he turned and yelled to his men to follow.

"Lights out, Harrison!" shouted Trentin at the same instant.

Harrison sprang across to the switches and in two turns of the wrist had the deck densely dark before Culver's orders could be obeyed.

"Let's get him this time," whispered Harrison. "I can't shoot for a cent; but if I can get my hands on him once more he'll——"

The siren whistle blew a wail.

"Come forward!" cried Trentin, "that's Hatch. He wants help. Every man to the bridge!" he shouted. "Come on," he added to Harrison, "They ran up the deck."

## ***THE FIGHT FOR THE SHIP***

Hatch was doing his best at steering with one hand. The other hung uselessly straight at his side.

"I got shot!" he exclaimed, "and you better look out for yourselves. There's somebody on the signal bridge again, and somehow or other he got in one on me. No, it ain't bad. Probably was one of them nickel-jacket ones; only I can't work my arm. It went right through. I ain't bled much."

The others straggled up to the bridge. Altogether, the ship's above-deck defenders now numbered only Trentin, Harrison, the two sound men, and Hatch.

"We're up against it this trip," remarked Harrison. "They shoot too straight for us."

"Never mind," declared Trentin. "We're not done yet. They can't get below the turtle back with us peppering at them. They have evidently determined to settle us first, and that's all right, for at the speed she's making now we'll be up with the fleet by sunrise—only about three hours. Hatch, you go in the chart house and lie down. I'll see to you presently. Harrison, will you take these men, please, and post them on guard at either end of the bridge? Thank you. Now, if you will steer her, I will see to Hatch's arm. After that he can keep watch of the top of the superstructure for us."

For nearly an hour things moved slowly. There were some sharp outbreaks when Culver tried to force his way along the main deck, and the Yard men held ground so well that he at length found the game too costly, and, as Trentin had predicted, if for a different reason, decided on getting control of the steering gear

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

and letting the engine rooms alone. He believed that if that plan could be accomplished he could deceive the mechanical crew into supposing Harrison was still in command, and thus bring the ship into his own lines in much better order and at less risk than he could do with his now reduced forces. The guard at the starboard bridge shouted and let go a shot. Simultaneously there was a like call from the port side. The Yard men opened a rapid fire.

"Go slow, go slow," ordered Trentin. "You haven't much ammunition, you know."

"They filled their belts just before you came aft," said Harrison.

With a howl of pain and fear the port-side guard dropped and rolled inertly down the ladder to the deck. Trentin caught up one of the unused rifles left by Culver's men, and running back to where the man had fallen, pumped a stream of fire into a little group who were rushing the ladder. The effect surprised both him and Harrison, because for fully another hour after that they were unmolested and not a shot was fired. Culver, clever sea soldier that he was, had made an estimate of the number of miles the ship had to go, and of the men available above decks for her defense. The long fight had disclosed every detail of the simple plan by which the battle was being kept above the engines, and he was more than satisfied to believe that he could now gain the forward bridge by a succession of rushes which he wisely chose to postpone until that moment in the ship's flight when she would begin drawing inshore again, to approach the Ameri-

## ***THE FIGHT FOR THE SHIP***

can fleet and avoid his own, sweeping down across the coast from the north and east. So Culver lay low.

Just at daybreak Trentin shifted the course in order to cross the line of the American patrol he expected to find outside the Portland Harbor forts.

"It's all a gamble from now on," he said to Harrison. "We may strike one thing and we may strike another."

Spat! came a bullet on a beam at the end of the bridge.

"That's good morning for us," remarked Harrison. "I'd like to be down in those boiler rooms for half an hour. I don't see how they kept it up."

"Hi!" shouted Hatch from the rear. "Look out! That shot came from the fighting top on the mainmast, I think."

Trentin and Harrison, who for the time had been standing in the center under the shelter of the funnels, hurried over to starboard and tried to see in the pale light. The one spare man took the wheel.

"There!" exclaimed Harrison.

Just as he raised his arm to point, a second shot was fired. Trentin heard a peculiar, inexplicable impact. Harrison gave an astonished grunt and tipped slowly backward on Trentin, who lowered him gently to the deck.

He coughed, and some blood was coming out of his mouth. He tried to speak, choked, and then closed his eyes as if he accepted at last a situation which he could not meet and grapple with by force.

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"There's ships ahead, sir," called the helmsman; "two or three of 'em."

"Hatch," cried Trentin, "keep your eyes open. Don't come out here at all. Set up a yell if you see anything bad. We're most there, now. Bear straight on your course till they pick us up," he added to the wheel.

Trentin found himself angry about something, most particularly at the unequal dispensation of a Fate which would destroy Harrison's life at the moment of its greatest achievement, and spare his own for the woful little he had made it worth. With the rifle held handily before him he crept on his knees under the shelter of the chart house and then out along the bridge until he could peep over the rail and see the fighting top on the main mast. Culver himself was standing there, a great black target against the lightening sky. He was shading his eyes with his hand, and trying indiscreetly to make out the character of the ships toward which the cruiser was moving diagonally to their course.

Trentin drew forward the rifle and laid it over the rail. He intended to be sure.

Afterwards Trentin returned to the wheel and slowed down the cruiser. He ordered up the guards who had been left below, and they made short work of the remnants of the cutters-out. Still Harrison lay on the bridge, breathing but wholly insensible. The blood had stopped.

Trentin made out a long line of fat battle-craft steaming over the horizon and sending thin clouds of smoke

## ***THE FIGHT FOR THE SHIP***

down to leeward as they came on. He pulled the siren three times. A string of little flags broke from the signal yard of the foremost ship, and without reading, but guessing at it, Trentin ran down alongside her and stopped. The cruiser's rusty red side rolled easily in the gentle sea.

"Will you please send doctors immediately?" he megaphoned through his hands. "We've had a fight."

They shouted to him some more, but he would not answer. He knelt by Harrison, and tried to help him, and wondered at the mystery of the thing. The pull of his home and of Emily was strong on him in that moment after the tension of the night, and his thoughts were very hard to bear. He heard the navy people coming off to him in a boat.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE SECOND IN COMMAND

**T**HE fellow we sent back to Oldport in the tender this morning," remarked the admiral at luncheon on the flagship that noon, to Trentin on the opposite side of the table, "that——"

"Harrison?" suggested Trentin.

"Yes, that Harrison," repeated the admiral, "is a good deal of a man. I remember seeing him when I inspected your Yard six or seven years ago. He grew up in it, I think your father said."

"He made it," replied Trentin. The admiral seemed to understand.

"What you told me about him proves true," he continued. "The ship is wonderfully complete. I don't see how he managed it. One day's quick work on her will finish about everything but her paint—and maybe that. That doesn't matter so much now the trouble is on. Red wouldn't be a bad campaign complexion for warships, would it? It will make her more of a target, though. I wonder how much the other side really knows about her. If you saw her designs, and I suppose you were one of the few who did, you know she really isn't a cruiser at all, but a new type of battleship on lines intended to conceal her character.

## THE SECOND IN COMMAND

If we haven't out-Japped the Japs this time, it's not because we didn't try hard enough."

The admiral had some canned peas very well buttered.

"Great butter in these parts," he remarked. "I always like to be on the Maine coast, in that way." Then he returned unexpectedly to the war. "As soon as she comes out of Portland, Mr. Trentin, I want you to return on board. She'll be ammunitioned and coaled and stored by then with what little more she needs to add to the select family groceries she brought from Oldport with her; and the new crew will have her points down pretty fine. I've given her the entire complement of the *Columbia*, which has to lay off in a fight, anyway. I only lack a navigator, and I appoint you to that station forthwith."

Trentin's face was full of guiltily sudden surprise.

"No, no, sir!" he protested, in a shame which maddened and humiliated him. "I can't—it wouldn't be right in any way. Harrison——"

"Don't talk back to me, sir!" interrupted the admiral, with genial severity. "I'll have you flogged at the mainmast for insubordination! Harrison's work is done—well done. That was his part of it—not this—it wouldn't have been, anyhow—he wasn't the type—uncommon mechanic who pounded his way toward the top by sheer grit. Yes, I know all about Harrison; and I know all about you, too. Don't be nervous. I'm not going to tell. You're as red as the cruiser, just now."

"I'm sorry in a way you won't appreciate," said

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

Trentin earnestly, "but I don't see how I could do it. It would look too theatrical."

"See here," said the admiral, "you know this coast like a book, don't you?"

"Yes," assented Trentin.

"And you know the ship's outs, if she has any, and her ins, which she has for certain, don't you?"

"Yes."

"And you know we are so short of officers—thanks to the chronic deafness of Congress—that I've had to ring in half a dozen steamboat skippers already, and midshipmen are doing the work usually expected of lieutenant commanders."

"Yes."

"Well, then, don't you dare disobey my orders unless you want to be hanged from the yardarm. You will join the Number Twenty-Nine Cruiser on her return from Portland, where she has gone for supplies and ammunition, and until relieved will act as her navigating officer. All movements of the ship when under way will be in your charge, directed by the captain. Understand?"

"Yes, admiral, I understand the meaning and the honor, and I could do it. But——"

"Look here, sir," exclaimed the admiral, "I believe you're afraid! That's different. If that's the case——"

"I'll go, sir!" broke in Trentin.

"You ought to be shot!" grumbled the admiral. "However, you may be, anyhow, and I'll spare you on that ground, this time. Try some more swordfish. This one was swimming in salt water not more than

## ***THE SECOND IN COMMAND***

twelve hours ago. We won't have another station like this before next summer. I think there ought to be an international law requiring all naval actions to be fought off the Maine coast. It's the best all-around place to live or die in—these potatoes came from Aroostook County just the day before yesterday—I ever saw. Look at that for a land-and-water view!”

Through the open port, where an eight-inch rifle poked its brown nose out of the shorn and dismantled cabin of the flagship, Trentin could see across the sparkling waters to a not-far-distant shore. Long walls of pale gray rock lay satin in the sun, while away and beyond the pleasant upland stretched, the white sides of many a low and spotless farmhouse making dazzling points upon the fields of varied green. Tall groves of pines and firs were shimmering in the steady breeze and glinting back into the wondrous azure of the sky the radiance which shone on every one of a million steely needles.

“Talk about Naples!” exclaimed the admiral. “This is the finest sea I ever sailed. Why don't they get up some Cook's Tours like this to show to Europeans?”

“You speak like a native,” laughed Trentin appreciatively.

“Why not?” responded the admiral. “I was born at Scarboro, and my mother was a Jones of Jonesport.”

“My father was a Scarboro man,” said Trentin.

“Of course he was!” replied the admiral. “It was East' Trentin who taught me to dig the first clams I ever boiled. I remember——”

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

An orderly of marines, saluting, entered with dispatches. Trentin took himself away to find the fleet surgeon and ask about Harrison.

"We can't tell," said the doctor. "He's hard hit. It would have been better to have sent him to the Portland hospital. Your idea of taking him back to Oldport wasn't a good one. I told you that, you remember. But it may probably amount to the same, in the end."

"For several reasons it was better," said Trentin.

"A woman, I suppose that means," answered the doctor. "It generally does. Well, that's often a factor, I admit—if the woman's a good deal to a fellow. He doesn't fret so much, and if he goes he goes easier. That would be my way. I believe in women when you're down. When you're not, you don't mind, of course."

"No," responded Trentin mechanically, "you don't mind."

"By the way," remarked the doctor, "the whole fleet is talking about the way you brought that cruiser of yours down last night. The Associated Press man is really taking some interest in life again. Did you see the tug full of newspaper reporters who were looking for you this noon? They want your picture and a diagram showing how you did it. Seriously, I don't see how you did, either. You ought to be in the service, sir."

So, everywhere he turned, Trentin's punishment was forced upon him by the unwitting kindnesses of those who did not know how deep their praises went and

## ***THE SECOND IN COMMAND***

with what a sting they hurt him. As the day closed, he felt that he could not endure it. They were saying the story was to be put into a great many newspapers.

"Where do you think I can find the Associated Press man?" he asked of the officer of the deck.

"The A. P. man?" echoed the young man addressed. "You won't see him until after the row. He's buying up all the telegraph companies in an effort to get the whole of his story about your great dash of last night wired on to New York. The last I saw of him he was trying to stow a forty-foot smile into a twenty-foot launch, and swearing at Edison because he hadn't invented a way of sending photographs by telegraph. He may never come back. I shouldn't wonder if he retired on a pension after this. He——"

Trentin went to pay his respects to the admiral before going over the side.

"I want to resign, sir," he urged. "I'm in earnest about it. Give me another berth where I won't be so conspicuous. I'll carry water, or shovel coal, or anything. But it isn't decent——"

"Neither will your burial be if you don't get out of my cabin!" retorted the admiral. "You're a regular traitor to your country, I swear—you——"

He threw down a bundle of dispatches on which he had been working and came over to Trentin. His manner underwent a swift change. Something which he had been trained to conceal disclosed itself.

"My boy," he said, with one hand on Trentin's shoulder. He looked into the younger man's eyes for a moment without words—"my boy," he repeated,

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

**"I understand it all, and I know best. Go in and—*win!*"**

He held Trentin's hand in a firm old sailor grip.

**"If I don't see you again," he said, "why then—well—so long!"**

As Trentin got into the launch he looked across the dancing water toward the hills which marked the harbor's mouth. A long red hull was coming from behind Ram Island, and above the sandy hummocks towered the smoky tops of four big funnels.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE FLYING WEDGE

**S**HE'S a big boiled lobster—just a regular big boiled lobster!" exulted Junior Lieutenant "Peach" Matson, in unexpected command of the forward turret of the Twenty-Nine. "What'll they think to see a ripe-red tomato of an unpainted surprise party coming down to the picnic!"

"I reckon they'll be kept too busy to worry about it," answered Mr. Dunwoody, of the engine-room force, and just two months out of the Academy. "We'll knock 'em color-blind, anyway."

"Don't you believe it!" objected Mr. Matson who, being six months out, knew what he was talking about. "They'll bring their little popguns with them, and they'll make you think this particular tin shop is painted red, white, and blue for a moving target at no yards."

"She's better than the *Columbia*, though," insisted the properly rebuked young gentleman.

"She's just as much better as a piano beats a boiler factory—the old red lobster!" agreed Mr. Matson joyously. "She's the answer to the riddle they didn't allow anybody to guess on, and the answer is that she isn't a cruiser at all, but a battleship or two disguised



## THE MASTER BUILDERS

as the President's yacht. If you fellows down there will only keep headway on her, we'll make somebody sit up."

"Headway?" snorted Mr. Dunwoody painfully. "If it's headway you want she'll do her twenty-four knots for you any morning before breakfast. She did twenty-one-fifty last night with a crew of green blacksmiths in her. If you fellows want headway, I guess you can be accommodated. The chief says he never saw better put up machines in his life."

When Trentin was called out of his stateroom at daybreak next morning, he dressed and went directly to the bridge.

"We shall get under way at once," said Captain Colbath. "The flagship signals the scouts have picked up the enemy again, coming down from the east'rd. You see the fleet is already moving."

Trentin had seen the lines of ships moving out from under the land; first, the armored cruisers, then the battleships with a flock of destroyers taking position on their flanks. Withdrawing into the harbor were a number of light cruisers and other craft not suited to the morning's heavy work.

"We remain in reserve," explained Colbath a little regretfully, "with the *Ohio*, *Kenduskeag* and *Mississippi*. I'm sorry; but the admiral felt that we ought not to expect too much of a new ship with a crew not yet used to her, and especially an entirely new type like this. She's been a mystery ship, you see, and now we've got her she's full of surprises that even we didn't

## ***THE FLYING WEDGE***

know about. Still, we may get a hand. We lead the reserve line."

Trentin made out the enemy's smoke, and by the time the lines were formed his ships were well up; four battle-craft and five cruisers, with sundry low smoke signs indicating torpedo boats. The Americans opened out to orders—five battleships, the Twenty-Nine and the three old armored cruisers which Colbath mentioned as making up the reserve. Trentin understood why the Twenty-Nine had been so urgently needed. The admiral was practically without a second line of battle.

"He ought to let us go out in the main line," said Trentin. "She'll stand against anything I know about."

"They may have a surprise of their own," laughed Colbath. "Besides, we must keep an eye on their cruisers. You never know exactly what an armored cruiser is till you've driven her on a beach and taken her apart to see. Hello, there's something!"

The enemy had opened fire from the bow turret of their foremost ship. Trentin saw that the Twenty-Nine was in position as indicated by Colbath's orders from the flagship, and then looked over the battle picture outspread before him. The Americans were advancing in line ahead, presenting no good target to the enemy's guns. When Trentin took up the fight the other side was meeting our plan with one of its own, and it was evident that the first phase of the encounter was to develop into a broadside action with the two main bodies of the fleets passing each other to star-

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

board. In the mean time the enemy's cruiser squadron had come to a halt astern of his advancing first line.

Neither of the fleets suffered apparent damage on the first move, and the lines passed each other at about ten knots' speed. On the turn the enemy's fourth battleship lost way in a manner unaccountable at the moment. She might have been hit in the steering gear. She began dropping out of line toward the American rear. At the same time two torpedo boats, which had been towed under her lee broadside, darted around her bows and headed for the fifth American battleship in a somewhat ostentatious show of effort to cut her out of line, while the remainder of the hostile force ceased firing and began a rapid turning movement as a whole, with this hand to hand skirmish as a center. Trentin noted this turn and wondered at it.

With a rattling minor roar the threatened ship opened on the torpedo vessels with her secondary battery, and sent up signals to the others in the fleet. To head off and intercept this detailed attack, the admiral signaled the whole American fleet to go about ship by ship and proceed in reverse order.

The enemy instantly drew in their torpedo boats and followed suit, but this time their line had been allowed to drift so far about the strategically created center of confusion, that the admiral found them crossing the bows of his new formation, greatly to his disadvantage. He therefore immediately caused his line to turn off to starboard in a curving sweep which would bring each ship presently broadside to the others, so that the original pass-by movement was repeated. But it

## ***THE FLYING WEDGE***

had no sooner been fairly begun, the enemy had no sooner made sure that they had successfully turned the American line of advance, than their waiting cruiser squadron began a full-speed dash around their own end to form the other wall of a lane of fire, to the passage of which the admiral was now irrevocably committed. Before he could make any new move there were hostile ships on both sides of him, and their range was rapidly drawing in.

Both Trentin and Colbath saw this at the same instant.

"Trapped!" cried Colbath.

"Those cruisers are going to rush him," said Trentin. "It's a flying wedge! Look!"

The five cruisers were being hurled at the American line in square formation, with three ships on the front line and two behind, while between the latter were several destroyers. They were going to strike the American center diagonally on one side while their battleships hammered it on the other.

"Look at that!" cried Trentin.

The military masts of the flagship—both of them at almost the same time—crumpled and went down as far as the conning towers. One funnel was already blown away, and most of her superstructure was scrap iron.

"Why isn't this our chance?" urged Trentin. He was thinking of what the admiral himself had said the day before.

"In the absence of signals—" protested the disciplined Colbath reluctantly.

"How can the flagship signal us now?" insisted

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

Trentin. "Don't we head the reserve division?" He sprang back to the engine-room telegraph.

"What do you say?" he shouted. His hand was on the lever. Colbath hesitated.

"Go ahead!" he yelled suddenly. "Signal the reserves to follow us," he added to his signal orderly.

Trentin was leaning over the bridge rail when a light patter on the steel around him showed that they were in the enemy's range. Colbath gave some orders. Presently the forward guns began firing. Trentin sent the helmsman into the conning tower, but himself remained out where he could see. When Colbath returned to the bridge Trentin was perceptibly nervous.

"We aren't going to do it," he said. "We're making only thirteen knots, to let the others keep up. Why not break loose and smash that wedge before it can enter our line?"

"Alone?" asked Colbath.

"Certainly! Any way to break it. Let's smash her right through."

"It couldn't be——"

Colbath put his hand to his head quickly, and turned toward Trentin with a queer smile which stayed there even when the blood poured down over his forehead and he fell clumsily to the deck in a dead mass which never moved again.

Trentin's mind was already made up. He rang for full speed ahead, and delivered a few explanatory remarks down the speaking tube. Then he sent an excited midshipman for the executive officer and told him what had happened and what was going to.

## ***THE FLYING WEDGE***

"I'm going to smash into their flying wedge without waiting for the slower ships," he said. "If you'll signal the others, and direct the guns, I'll take her in."

Crash! came a sizable shell against the face of the turret below them.

"All right," said the executive officer, "keep on." He gave some orders to such officers as were near him, and left the bridge.

Trentin yelled down the speaking tube again. Then he went into the conning tower, for the fire was growing in heat and concentration. The Twenty-Nine was making twenty-one-forty at that moment. There were others in the conning tower, but he saw only the man at the wheel and that part of the telltale mechanism which reported on conditions in the engine rooms. Some one began asking him questions.

"Don't talk to me now!" he shouted above the blast of the guns. "Do your work and let me do mine. I'm going to strike that wedge between the first and second lines, and we're going clear through it. Govern yourselves accordingly and don't try to talk to me."

The admiral's orders as to Trentin were known to everybody, and that assisted him. His irresistible enthusiasm did the rest. Once more, without directly spoken assumption of authority, he was master in the Trentin ship.

The eight-inch shells had raked the superstructure deck to port and starboard. Smaller fire was coming in on the main deck through the gun ports. Still the Twenty-Nine drove on. The needle on the indicator in front of Trentin's face was moving slowly forward.

## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

One hundred and twenty-two, one hundred and twenty-two-fifty, one twenty-three—to his delight he saw that the farther she went the faster she paced it out. A terrific explosion shook the entire cruiser and was followed by a series of crashing falls as something heavy went down.

“Mainmast carried away,” said somebody. “They’re firing——”

Another explosion seemed almost to halt the cruiser full in her course. The shock threw down everyone in the conning tower. Choking gases poured through the slits in the thick, steel walls.

“For’ard turret jammed, sir,” reported some one to the executive officer, who crawled out blindly. Trentin was the first to recover himself. He sprang to the wheel and held the ship on her course.

“Can’t fire a gun forward, sir,” announced a midshipman, tumbling into the conning tower, “and the telephone system is all gone.”

“All right,” responded Trentin. Straight ahead of him he had the greater battle in his eyes, the wavering line of American battleships now drawing down on his port beam, the enemy beyond and firing between them at the Twenty-Nine; and dead in his path the flying wedge of cruisers straining on toward the admiral’s surrounded ships. He looked at the indicator. One hundred and twenty-six, seventy-five! Twenty-three knots and——

“Destroyer coming out, sir,” reported the steersman.

Trentin again took the helm himself.

## ***THE FLYING WEDGE***

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## **THE MASTER BUILDERS**

Nine had now drawn in past the line of fire of the battleships and was receiving only the focused peppering of the hostile cruiser squadron. She trembled with the continuous impact of their eight-inch shells, but not once did she slack her pace. Not for a moment did the needle on the brass face of the indicator show a decimal less than 127.50 turns. The Trentin ship was spurting fair!

A small torpedo boat raced from behind the second line of the enemy's cruisers, just as the Twenty-Nine flew into the space between the first and second ships on the right of the wedge.

"Look out!" shouted the executive.

"Hold on tight!" responded Trentin.

He drove straight into the bow of the newcomer, which wilted and went down head first.

"That's dangerous," commented the executive officer.

"She might have known it!" answered Trentin, mistaking his meaning.

The whole wedge was thrown into disorder. The sudden appearance of this strange looking flyer and the accuracy of her gun fire, backed by an evident intention of getting herself run into by everything which happened in her way, were too much for the enemy's reserve captains. Besides, the American admiral had seen the dash and was supplementing it with some moves of his own. His main line broke, but in good order. While four vessels swung off to meet the quartet of foreign battleships, the remaining war-scarred cruiser turned out in the other direction to join in smashing

## ***THE FLYING WEDGE***

the wedge which the Twenty-Nine had broken up. Astern, the three other American reserves, slow but sturdy, were coming up and getting their fire into play. The American destroyers began taking an active hand.

But Trentin drove on. By the time he reached the farther side of the wedge every attempt at formation had disappeared. Each ship was fighting for her life. The movement had been stopped.

Delivering two cracking broadsides as she passed through, the Twenty-Nine shot into open water again, and as the stern turret began getting in good hits on the enemy's uncertain ranks Trentin put his helm over and brought her around in a broad, inshore loop, which revealed to him the hot fight going on between the now detached battleship divisions.

"Where you going?" inquired the executive officer.

"Let's get into this other one," said Trentin.

"They may need us."

But even then the fight was ending. One American ship was standing toward shore with a list so heavy they knew she was hurrying in to be beached. The flagship lay helpless as to motive power, but firing every one of her turret guns. Her whole upper works were swept off, so that she looked like an exaggerated double-ender ferryboat with the stump of one funnel sticking up out of the center of her. One of the enemy's battleships was going slowly down, stern first, another was already beached, a third was under the flagship's quarter with a white flag on what was left of her mast, and the fourth was fighting her way painfully along the coast with not more than two guns working and half a

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

dozen destroyers slyly harrying her into the range of the hidden batteries in the Portland forts.

At a reasonable distance Trentin, most reluctantly, rang down the cruiser's headway and let her drift while they watched on one side the shattered giants in the finish fight, and on the other the American reserves encircling the cruisers and forcing them to flight or to surrender. The thing was as good as done.

"Cruiser come alongside," signaled the flagship, running the bunting up on the perforated stump of one funnel.

"Commanding officer come out on deck," hailed a voice through a megaphone, as the Twenty-Nine pulled up fifty yards away from the broken, blackened body of the staunch old fighter. No one moved.

"Admiral wants to see the commanding officer on deck—on your own deck," repeated the voice. Not a soul was visible on the battleship. It was impossible to say where the voice came from.

"Well," said Trentin to the executive, "why don't you obey orders?"

"I?" replied the other. "Not much. Why don't you?"

"The—admiral—wants—the—" began the flagship again, not quite so wearily.

The executive officer jumped up and out. A half-minute later he was on the top of the forward turret.

"Mr. Trentin, who fought the ship through this action, declines to appear," he said. "We've lost Captain Colbath and a good many men, and are some damaged by shells; but she can proceed to any duty the

## ***THE FLYING WEDGE***

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## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

passengers scrambled up with their swords thumping on the armor plate at every step. They had Trentin dragged out to the deck, where everyone could see him. As the admiral saluted him, and took his hand, his voice trembled, and into eyes no other sentiment than what he felt could have dimmed, there came a glow of significant moisture.

"My—Mr. Trentin," he said, in the stillness which had fallen all about, "the navy and the country owe you more than can ever be repaid. You won the fight for us, that's all. Though this ship belongs now to the United States, I have no power to further command your services. But I will ask, as a special favor, that I be permitted to go into Portland Harbor with her in order to file a personal dispatch for Washington, and that you will then allow me to send you back to your home in the ship herself."

"Home?" repeated Trentin absently.

"Yes," said the admiral. "You deserve it after this."

Trentin wondered if he did.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### AN END AND A BEGINNING

**A**FTER a short run up from the Light through the glow of the September morning, the Twenty-Nine slowed down and let her chain cable go at a rate which made a roaring echo along the sunny shore. Trentin shook a great many hearty hands before he went over the side to be taken to his own pier, opposite which the cruiser had stopped prior to going on to the Yard. It was in the orders that she was to be repaired there by her original crew, now quite beyond the reach of labor unions of the Whitehead ilk.

The house was very still as Trentin approached it. The unheralded arrival of the Twenty-Nine had drawn no notice from the town as yet. The housemaid met him at the door without her usual cheery smile, and spoke to him in whispers.

"He's up stairs, in the guest room," she said, without waiting to be asked, and motioning over her shoulder.

"Harrison, you mean?" asked Trentin.

"Yes," said the maid. "He's bad."

"May I go up?" The strangeness of the question seemed no excuse for evading it. Trentin felt that matters stood so now. The maid did not deny that view.

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

"I'll ask," she replied. "You can wait in the library."

He could not sit down, or put his hand to anything, but stood like a stranger, holding his hat. There was his desk, as he had left it a day or two before, and the table strewn with his reading and Emily's. But the manner of his departure from these things, what he had felt when last he saw them, and the revolutionary transformations which had entered into his life in that short interval, made all this seem no part of his present self, but something of a past which had been removed from him forever. He realized now, in the retrospect, how in the few hours when his awakening was being accomplished, he had set himself to other things; and that the things to which he had set himself were new and distant from these which he saw around him, caused him that first pang of the suffering which he very clearly understood was to be his lot.

"You can go up," announced the maid.

"Thank you," replied Trentin formally. He went slowly into the guest room, the familiar orderliness of which was now replaced by the disheartening impedimenta of the desperately ill. Emily knelt by the window which faced on the harbor. She was supporting Harrison in a large chair stuffed with pillows, so that he could look out upon the water. When Trentin hesitated, she beckoned him silently with one hand without removing the other from Harrison's shoulders. A woman in the crisscrossed apron strings of a hospital nurse stood near them, watching.

Trentin moved slowly around on the side opposite

## ***AN END AND A BEGINNING***

Emily, so that he could see the face of the wounded man. The sight shocked him. He would not have known Harrison at first. The pasty face was not his at all, and the chest was all hollowed in and flat as if it had been crushed like paper. There were some spots of fresh red on the white front of his clothing. Trentin could scarcely make Harrison out of it at all.

Harrison did not see him. He was looking straight out at the cruiser, moving his head from side to side as if his eyes did not well adjust themselves to any fixed object.

"There she is!" he whispered huskily. "Good old Twenty-Nine! I wonder what they'll name her. I heard, but I forget. She came back after me. I built her. She knows it. I built her right, too. They'll find that out when they try her. Good old Twenty-Nine!"

He stopped speaking, and for several minutes, while Emily held him, his gaze went over and over the lines of the ship. The loss of her masts puzzled him, but after a time he seemed to understand, and nodded to himself about it. Presently his head sank sidewise upon the pillow, and he saw Trentin standing by him.

"Hello!" he said, in his thickening voice. "I—I came back! I had to. She let me come in here. I had no home or anything. You don't mind, now? Let her hold me like this, will you—just like this—every—every—it's only a little bit of a while, and she's——"

They put him back upon the pillows tenderly. The nurse smoothed his forehead and then, as no one else



## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

said anything and perhaps divining something of the situation, she spoke to Trentin while Emily remained by Harrison :

“ He will never be well. He can never be anything like himself again, and we shall not really get him up. But the doctor says he may go on a long time. They are going to have a specialist come down. The doctor isn’t sure—but it has affected the spinal cord and the brain——”

Trentin looked at Emily and at the torn body of the man which lay between them. He thought he saw his duty and his way, quite clearly.

“ Would you mind, unless you need me,” he said gently, “ if I went away for a while to Washington? The Navy Department wants me to come there. A navy man would come down to look after the Yard. Some ships will be repaired here. You wouldn’t—mind? ”

The very vagueness of his question and the honest awkwardness of his manner disconcerted her. In that instant she noted the transformation in him.

Harrison stirred heavily in the chair, and muttered something. Emily started toward him quickly, and then returned to Trentin. Both of them felt the presence of the other man in a new sense—they felt his right to be there.

“ No, Boy,” she answered. “ I— No, for a while it would be—better. Afterwards, maybe——”

She looked at him in a weakness he felt, perhaps with an unwise and unjust sense of what his expiation ought to be, he had no right to take advantage of.

## ***AN END AND A BEGINNING***

What he had done in the battle, and what he intended doing in the larger and more vital struggles of his life, did not seem to him worth while for the mentioning. He only thought of the man whose shattered body lay there in that neglected house of his, better adorning it even with the piteous disorder of its wounds than he in all his years of unappreciated opportunity had adorned it. And so he did not speak the word which might have then been spoken, but went out very quietly.

He went down to the library and looked about him for a last view of the things that had made up his life in that room. Each of them had its story, and each gave him a pang of keen remorse. At the end of the long table where Emily wrote letters and often sat with embroidery on rainy days while he worked at his desk, he saw that she had left a tiny bit of lace half done. He went over and took it up and held it. Its fineness was like her own exquisite texture. It had the fragrance of her. He loved it with all his soul. Gently he slipped the needles from their places and broke the stitches, and folded the soft thing together to be kept and treasured after he had gone away.

Just at his hand her picture stood in a little gold frame—he remembered when they had gone together to have it made. He put the lace in his pocket, and took up the picture. The power of the conflicting things he felt nearly overcame him—the immensity of his tenderness for her, and a sudden fierce anger against Harrison for being there in that house. And after the anger came the shame and remorse once

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

more, and the thought that Harrison had deserved more right than he, and that he must go and leave them together. He imagined them there, with Harrison getting stronger and Emily ever with him, taking care. Trentin thought of that, and it was his punishment.

He put the picture down, but did not take his fingers away or let it go out of his hand. He snatched it back and held it to his lips for an instant, then put it in its place, and, with a final glance about the room, turned to leave the house. For a moment he waited in the silent hall, forming his hard resolution and fighting back the indecision that returned to him and was almost welcome. He could hear Emily moving on the floor above him, through the stillness of which he could not make himself a part. He looked up through the open well of the staircase, and saw her pass across the hall toward the place where Harrison was. Trentin's mind contained a vivid picture of that place. With one of those childlike fancies that come with men's distresses, he wished that he could take Harrison's wounds upon himself and lie and die there under the touch of Emily's hands. It would have been easier than what he had to do. It would have been a fairer thing of Fate.

Trentin went back into the library and got the little picture in the gold frame and put it into his pocket. Then he gathered himself firmly and went and opened the side door and left the house. On the porch he encountered Mrs. Dix. She carried a large and important extension bag, and had some sort of garments

## ***AN END AND A BEGINNING***

thrown over one arm. She appeared to have come to remain some time. As Trentin stepped back and held the door for her, she gave him one contemptuous look and passed in without a word. Before he could do so she wheeled and shut the door, in his face. He heard the key turn. They had locked him out of his own house!

If Trentin had wished to know the sting of Harrison's wound he knew it then. And yet—for the second time he found his mind rising against a blow. Instinctively he felt himself swinging back to meet it in the way his hunting days had taught him to meet his physical fatigues. He felt his very muscles growing tense against the thought. The sense that he was a strong man in more than the hunter's way came into him. The memory of the battle came back. He remembered his power over the ship, and how everyone in her had obeyed his word. He felt his fingers gripping the wheel of her as he drove her through that fight, and with no thought other than that of his own strength he lifted his arm and threw it, backed by all his weight, against the locked door and burst it open.

Trentin straightened himself from the effort and walked directly through the hall and up the stairs. Above he met the nurse, frightened by the noise of the broken door; and passed her by and went in to Harrison's room. Emily and Mrs. Dix were by him, bending over. The nurse hastened after Trentin and caught at his sleeve.

"You must not come in," she said. "He has changed. He is dying."

## ***THE MASTER BUILDERS***

Trentin said nothing to her, but went and stood in front of Harrison, between him and the light. There was no doubt of what the nurse had said. The end had come.

Trentin stepped forward quickly and took one of Harrison's hands.

"You may leave us, Mrs. Dix," he said, and turned then to the nurse. "You will wait in the hall until I send for you."

In spite of his low tone, the command in his voice and bearing was unmistakable. Mrs. Dix led out the rebelling nurse, and closed the door. Trentin bent close toward Harrison.

"Old man," he said, still holding to the quivering hand, "we are standing by you all the time. We'll see you through it!"

He could say no more.

But Harrison had heard. Light came back into his emptying face, and his hand gripped Trentin's manfully. With the other he made a gesture fairly strong and like himself.

"My coat," he whispered, and Emily brought it and gave it to him. He slipped his hand from Trentin's grasp and tremblingly took from an inner pocket a creased and faded leather wallet which Trentin recognized as one he had seen his father carrying when he was a lad. Fumbling pitifully into it, Harrison drew out a folded paper, undid it, and handed it to Trentin.

"My dear Son—" Trentin read the broken line in a wondering undertone, and stopped, looking inquiringly at Harrison.

## ***AN END AND A BEGINNING***

Harrison held out his hand again, and Trentin clasped it in his own.

"Old man," he said. He felt the fingers close in a grip as of comradeship and perfect understanding. Harrison smiled up at him with eyes so ineffably beautiful that they transfigured all his hardened face. It was a thing they never afterwards were able to understand. And so he died.

Trentin put Harrison's hand gently down upon the other and called the two women and told them what to do.

"Come with me," he said to Emily, and led the way down to the library and so out upon the porch at the sea side of the house. The blistered hulk of the unnamed ship still lay in the channel, all her graceful beauty of outline beaten into an ugly and menacing disarray from out of which the ragged butts of her masts and the honeycombed funnels reared defiantly. But at her stern there shone in brilliant glory the gleaming colors of the flag, and Trentin's heart sprang far above the heaviness of the morning in a flight of momentary joy—the echo of the battle passion by which he had been made free!

"Emily," he said, holding naturally the note of utter confidence and power he had assumed as something like a right, "that is my ship, and this is my house. I fought her through the battle, and they say I made the victory that will end the war. They want me in Washington, but I am not going there. I am going to stay here, in my own house, and do the work my father left me to do."

## **'THE MASTER BUILDERS**

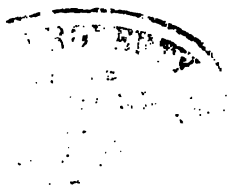
To Emily it was as if the masterful spirit of the man who had died for them had entered into Trentin's being. There was the same uncompromising straightforwardness, the same directness of command that had made Harrison the personification of the clenched fist, and had carried them through the breakers into port. She knew the blood, and recognized her captain.

She came and kissed him on the mouth, and they went into their house together.

Over the water there came faintly the musical jangle of engine-room bells; and, rippling her way slowly through the shining wavelets of the harbor, the Trentin ship returned in triumph home.

(1)

THE END











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